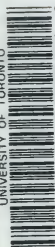


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Don Carlos.

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by A. Maignau.





GUERNSEY EDITION.

DRAMAS

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. I.

HERNANI—THE TWIN BROTHERS
ANGELO—AMY ROBSART

BY VICTOR HUGO



73
2283
147
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GUERNSEY EDITION.

Limited to One Thousand Copies.

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HERNANI.
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DON LEO DE SYLVA.
DON HENRIQUEZ.
THE DUKE OF BAVARIA.
THE DUKE OF GOTH.
DON MATTHIAS.
DON RICARDO.
DE HARO.
DUKE ALCALA.
DUKE PARMA.
KING OF BOHEMIA.
FIRST CONSPIRATOR.
SECOND CONSPIRATOR.
A MOUNTAINEER.
BLACK DOMINO.
DONNA ZANTHE.
JOSEPHA.
ISADORE.

Conspirators of the Holy League, Germans and Spaniards, Mountaineers, Lords, Soldiers, Pages, Folk, etc.

SPAIN, 1519.

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HERNANI.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A bed chamber. Night. A lamp on a table; door of a closet, L. 2 E.; a small door, R. C.; a door R. 2 E.; door of entrance, L. C.; a table, R. C., and chairs. JOSEPHA discovered at embroidery. A knocking heard at a small door on the R. C.; she listens; knocking a second time.*

JOSEPHA.

He knocks. Yet sure 't is scarcely yet his time!

[Knocking heard a third time.]

Yes, 't is his signal. And from thence it comes.

No loiterer he. *[Goes to the door, R. C., and opens it.]*

DON CARLOS *enters, wrapped in a cloak, and a broad hat covering his eyes.*

JOSEPHA.

Good day, young cavalier. *[Looks closer.]*

Ah! 't is a stranger. Ho! within there! help!

DON CARLOS *(seizing her arm).*

Another word, old woman, is thy last,

Save at my pleasure. Thou art dumb; 't is well —

Then is there reason in thee! Answer me:

This chamber is the privacy, is 't not,

Of Donna Zanthé, — she that is affianced

To wed her kinsman, old Don Leo Gomez?
 The veteran, that despite grey hairs, yet vaunts
 A soul as fiery in love or war
 As we of nimbler pulse and rounder limb!
 Is 't so?

JOSEPHA.

It is. This is her chamber, signor.

DON CARLOS.

Good. And the fair betrothed yields, as I think,
 To strange disloyal fancies: dreams o' nights,
 While Grey-beard sleeps securely, of a chin
 Furnished in daintier fashion, of moustachios
 Sleek and ungrizzled, that encumber not
 The lips of love, and above all, an eye,
 Stood rival legions armed against his hopes,
 Would look a fierce defiance to them all, —
 How 's this, old dame?

JOSEPHA.

You bade me hold my peace.

DON CARLOS.

Save at my pleasure, that will have thee speak,
 And quickly. For thy conscience and discretion,
 This gripe acquits them both. Wilt answer me?

JOSEPHA.

I will.

DON CARLOS.

Your amorous dotard is abroad, no doubt?'

JOSEPHA.

He is.

DON CARLOS.

The youth expected?

JOSEPHA.

Yes.

DON CARLOS.

And here the turtles are to meet and coo.

JOSEPHA.

So you spoil not their cooing.

DON CARLOS.

That may happen.

Conceal me.

JOSEPHA.

Lo, the door by which you entered
Is open, signor, and the city's wide.
Go and conceal yourself.

DON CARLOS.

Here, in this chamber,
Find me a hiding place.

JOSEPHA.

Find *you*? For what?
What seek ye with my mistress?

DON CARLOS.

I — oh! nothing.

JOSEPHA.

What then with me?

DON CARLOS.

Nay, truly, nothing either.

JOSEPHA.

Begone then.

DON CARLOS.

In good time. Wilt hide me ?

JOSEPHA.

Never.

DON CARLOS.

I have some precious metals here may help me.

[*Draws from his girdle a dagger and a purse.*]

Wilt please you choose between them, —

Steel or gold ?

JOSEPHA.

You are the devil, then.

DON CARLOS.

To-night I am.

JOSEPHA.

I think so ; and despite my sanctity,

I needs must hold a candle to thee.

DON CARLOS.

Wisely resolved.

JOSEPHA.

Give me thy gold. 'T is lusty, faith ! /

[*Takes it, then opens a closet, L.*]

Now enter here.

DON CARLOS (*crosses to the closet*).

Here ! Art thou mad, old lady ?

What fiddle-case is this ? I could not thrust

My cloak in it.

JOSEPHA.

You 'll find no other here,

Depend on 't ; so, since hiding is your pleasure,

If 't is a fiddle-case, be you the fiddle.

You'll not be first, that I can tell you, signor,
Nor like to make much music in our concert.

DON CARLOS (*entering*).

If I out come alive, it must be quickly.

JOSEPHA.

Hark! I hear
My mistress coming. Shut the door.

DON CARLOS.

Now, mark me :
Unless you'd have the steel, as well as gold,
Be trusty. Not a word!

JOSEPHA.

I shall remember. [*Shuts him in.*]
Who can the savage be? What brings him here?
Shall I be bold and call for help? From whom?
All in the palace sleep except myself
And Donna Zanthé. Then I'll keep my counsel.
The brave Hernani cannot tarry long.
And let him look to it. His gold may fail,
But for his steel, he'll match with this gallant,
I'll warrant him.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE R. 2 E.

ZANTHE.

Josepha!

JOSEPHA.

Madam.

ZANTHE.

I begin to fear
Some accident. Hernani should be here
Ere this. Have you not heard his signal?

JOSEPHA.

No, madam. Once I fancied I had heard it,
But found I was mistaken.

ZANTHE (*listening*).

Didst not hear
A footstep?

JOSEPHA.

No. At night one hears so plainly —
Dogs, cats, and other restless animals
That fidget strangely. Some such thing you heard.

ZANTHE.

No, no, his step approaches. To the door
Before he knocks. [JOSEPHA crosses to R. D., opens it.

[HERNANI enters in a large cloak and hat, and beneath,
the dress of a Mountaineer of Arragon, grey, with a
cuirass of leather, wearing a sword, a poniard sus-
pended from his left shoulder, and a horn in his
girdle.

HERNANI.

Donna Zanthe!
Do I again behold thee? hear my name
Uttered by thy sweet voice, whose music dwells
Forever on my fancy, lulling me
Even on my mountain couch with happy dreams?

ZANTHE.

Heavens!
Your cloak is drenched. Has it then rained so hard?

HERNANI.

I mark'd it not.

ZANTHE.

You must be cold.

HERNANI.

'T is nothing.

ZANTHE.

Nay, let me dry thy mantle.

Thou'rt cold I'm sure; let me have fire to cheer thee.

HERNANI (*his hand to his breast*).

Here,

Here resides a power

To mock the elements, or storm for storm

Encounter them, — a fire that sets at nought

The falling torrent or the wintry blast.

Feel this wild pulse. These water-drops refresh me.

ZANTHE (*taking his cloak*).

But this encumbers you — and this (*his sword*) — I'll
take them.

HERNANI.

Nay, not my good sword, unless for jealousy —

Of one more friend, constant and true as thou art;

A friend well proved and trusty. Your duke — your
lord

(Your lord so named abroad by every voice) —

Where is he?

ZANTHE.

Speak not of him now. This hour

Belongs to us.

HERNANI.

This hour, — alas! it may be

This and no more, — a bright and starry hour

In one long night of darkness — desolation! [*crosses to L.*]

ZANTHE.

Hernani!

HERNANI (*bitterly*).

Yet this hour I must enjoy,
Be proud to steal one hour of love from him
Who robs me of my life to come.

ZANTHE.

Nay, calm thee. Good Josepha, dry his mantle.

[*Exit JOSEPHA with mantle, R. 2 P.*]

ZANTHE (*takes a seat L. of table and beckons HERNANI*).
Come, come and sit by me.

HERNANI.

The Duke is absent, then?

ZANTHE.

Nay, think not of him! [*Rising and coming down c.*]

HERNANI.

Not think of him! You mock me. Hath he not
A burning love for thee? Have I not seen
His withered lips imprint on thine a kiss?

ZANTHE.

'T was a kinsman's kiss,
And such as fathers to their children give.

HERNANI.

A kiss thou art unschooled in, — such a kiss
'T would madden me to think thou could'st requite.
I cry you mercy. I offend, perhaps,
His blooming bride. You doubtless wed him freely;

ZANTHE.

I have shown pity for an inward grief
That long oppressed him, and he hath been to me
A kind protector and a loving kinsman ;
But with my own good-will I ne'er will wed him.

HERNANI.

Not with thy own good-will ? Dost think the lunatic
Will forge thy chains of iron ?

ZANTHE.

The King, 't is said, will have it so.

HERNANI (*surprised and much excited*).

The King ! the King !
A heavier, bitterer curse
Than all I yet have breathed, now light on him.
My noble father on the scaffold died,
Condemned by his ! Sworn and relentless foes,
Full thirty years their strife endured. The grave
Has closed on both. But in their sons their hate,
Sacred inheritance, survives more fiercely.
My love for thee, that for a time had seemed
To soothe my stubborn rancour, arms it now
With sting more deadly. Carlos of Castile !
I've hunted thee as famished wolves their prey ;
Watched, traced thee like a bloodhound. In good time
Thou com'st athwart my path. Thou'rt welcome
heartily. [Crosses to R.

ZANTHE.

You terrify me.

HERNANI.

Hear me. The man to whom foul tyranny
Would link thy youth, is a grandee, rich, powerful.

His youth is past, — long past. Thy heart's free throb
Of honest sympathy can ne'er be his.
What then? Thou 'lt be a duchess; move in pageants,
Bravely apparell'd as the Queen herself;
Thy sphere a court; thy home a palace! I
Am poor; in woods and wilds I dwell,
And live as lives the tiger. It may chance
I have my blazon of nobility,
Tho' a brave father's blood may somewhat rust it;
Rights and titles
In the black scaffold-cloth enveloped long,
Which this good sword may one day bring to light.
Meantime the beam that blesses all, the free
And common elements, are all my portion.
I cannot waste my heart in jealous fears:
This hour unites, or else forever parts us.
Decide, then. Wed thy duke — or follow me.

ZANTHE.

I'll follow thee.

HERNANI.

Thou wilt? Rash maid! Thou 'lt share a lot like mine!
For noble as I am by birth, by nature
The friend of man, the foe alone of tyrants,
I am proclaimed an outlaw. Throughout Spain
The death-shout hath pursued me, till secure
Amid old Catalonia's wilderness
Of savage rocks, I stood at bay
And won her lusty mountaineers in troops
To stand by me. This horn now musters them,
Three thousand strong! You tremble! Such is he
Thou lov'st. Think well on't! Caves and dark ravines
Our only shelter; couched on the bare earth;
Fed by the changeful fortune of the chase,
Or hostile plunder; every sound a larum



A. G. H. H. H.

Leopoldine 1877

To lynx-eyed caution, yielding not an hour
Of tranquil rest — oh! think, day after day,
To wander with me thus; it may be, follow me
Where I my father follow, — to the scaffold.

ZANTHE.

I'll follow thee!

HERNANI.

The Duke will have thee pillowed
On softest down! The Duke lives proud in favour,
His name untarnished, his escutcheon bright —

ZANTHE (*eagerly*).

I'll follow *thee*. To-morrow will we fly.
I owe my life to thee. I am thine.
The spell that won thee
Three thousand followers hath won me too.
With thee I'll wander, or with thee abide.
To see thee, hear thee, know and share thy fortunes,
Is all I ask. Oh! we will never part.
When thy last footstep hath escaped my ear
My heart no longer seems to beat — entombed
And dead within my bosom; dead to all things —
Till, heard afar, the sweet returning music
Dissolves the trance and brings me life again.

HERNANI.

Was I reserved for this! Unlooked-for-hour!
Such love is only woman's; it hath changed
My tyrant heart, abashed by selfish will,
And now I shudder at my rash demand,
For yet you know not half the history —

[*Here DON CARLOS breaks from the closet, L., with a violent crash.* ZANTHE shrieks and clings to HERNANI.

DON CARLOS.

Your history's too long. You that are fond
Of air should have more mercy for a man,
Stilted as I have been.

HERNANI.

Who is this man?

ZANTHE.

I know not! Sure, some robber.

DON CARLOS.

Softly, Donna.

My crippled limbs have had such lame amends
In satisfaction of my eyes or ears
That who your favoured visitor may be
'T were rash to guess at; yet I scarcely think
Our fellowship will much disgrace him.

ZANTHE.

Leave us.

HERNANI (*crosses to C.*).

What seek you here?

DON CARLOS.

First let me know, rough sir,
Your proud authority to question me.
What if I seek an hour or two's diversion?

HERNANI.

Unless your will bequeath it to your heir,
Your raillery may be brief.

DON CARLOS.

Nay, every man
His turn. I have, with all due courtesy,
Allowed you yours, and claim requital, signor.
That you should love this lady's bright black eyes,

I marvel not ; for by St. Dominick
 I love them too, and could not choose but know
 The youth who found o' nights such prompt admittance
 While I stood patient sentinel below.

HERNANI.

I'd have your curiosity provoke
 No further knowledge of him. Hence !

DON CARLOS.

Your pardon.

Of you I know enough ; but for the lady [*crosses to c.*],
 She is a mine so rich in sweet instruction
 As may excuse my tarrying to explore.
 A boon I ask, for her sake and for yours.
 The steed who walks an undisputed course
 Wins an inglorious race. I may afford you
 A trophy for your victory, and exercise
 The lady's judgment with a choice at least.

ZANTHE.

I know you not. How got you here admittance ?

DON CARLOS.

I was mistaken for a happier man,
 But not so well disposed of.

HERNANI.

Insolent !

DON CARLOS.

If thus you swell, keep clear of yonder closet ;
 You would explode as quickly there —

HERNANI.

As now

> My sword would quit its scabbard.

[*Draws.*]

DON CARLOS (*crossing R., draws also*).

Give it air ;
We'll find it exercise.

ZANTHE.

Hernani ! hold !

For my sake ! [*Throws herself between them.*

HERNANI (*puts her across to his L.*).

'T is an ill-placed quarrel, sir ;
An honest foe in fitter time will end it.
Your name !

DON CARLOS.

In fair exchange — yours ?

HERNANI.

'T is a secret, —

Marr'd in its purpose by a rash disclosure,
Reserved for one into whose ear I'll whisper it,
When by a conqueror's knee transfixed I hold him
And plunge my dagger in his heart.

DON CARLOS.

Brave talking !

Your vengeance in contingency is deadly,
Your present wisely sacrificed.

HERNANI.

No more ! Defend yourself !

[*They draw. ZANTHE in despair. Loud knocking heard at the D. L. C.*

ZANTHE.

We are surprised ! Oh, heavens !

[*The combatants pause. JOSEPHA enters at the door R. 2 E. in great alarm.*

HERNANI.

Who knocks so loud ?

JOSEPHA.

Oh, madam ! Fatal chance !
It is the Duke returned.

ZANTHE.

The Duke ! I'm lost !

HERNANI.

This way, we'll fly. [*Crosses to R. C.*].

JOSEPHA.

'T is guarded from without.

DON LEO (*without L. C.*).

Admit me, Zanthé.

HERNANI (*to JOSEPHA, who is going to the door*).

Woman, stay !

JOSEPHA.

Good saints defend us ! we are all undone.

HERNANI (*to DON CARLOS*).

We must conceal ourselves.

DON CARLOS.

Where ?

[HERNANI *points to closet, L.*

You'll excuse me.

What ! two such panting spirits ! We should shake
The very walls. You, signor, where you will ;
I care not to encounter duke or devil,
And here I stand.

HERNANI.

This outrage shall o'ertake you.

DON CARLOS (*to JOSEPHA*).

Open the door.

HERNANI.

Are you then mad?

DON CARLOS (*more imperatively*).

Open the door!

JOSEPHA.

I will.

[*Runs trembling to the door.*]

ZANTHE.

Mercy!

[*The door, L. C., is opened, and enter DON LEO DE SYLVA, followed by Attendants with lights; he is dressed in black, and wears the Order of the Golden Fleece.*]

DON LEO.

So, my fair cousin, you've your midnight audience,
To which I scarce am welcome! Lights here, ho!
This is a scene worthy of witnesses.
Why what wild times, young cavaliers, are these?
Is this that same Castile that boasted once
Her Cid, her brave Bernardo, — giant hearts
Whose pride it was to bear about the world
A shield for the oppress'd, reverence for age,
And to unspotted beauty bend the knee
Of chivalrous devotion!
What seek you here; is he
Who fought at Zamora beneath defiance,
And, for a few grey hairs, to be cajoled
By ribald practices like these?

HERNANI.

Great Duke —

DON LEO.

Be silent. Have ye not your games and pastimes,
Your hunting and your falconry, your masques,
Your revels and carousals, that ye now
Will madly sport —

HERNANI.

Good signor, let me say —

DON LEO.

Say nothing; you are born but to obey me.

HERNANI.

Your tone! —

DON LEO.

My tone is courteous — does ye honour.
Boys — triflers — if ye know not who I am,
Follow me! What! the honour of my house,
The honour of my chosen wife, — a maid
Pure as the mountain snow which summer suns
Irradiate and melt not, in my charge,
And such as you invade it! Dauntless felons!
Are these the treasures you would rob me of?
Me! a De Sylva! Blood of my ancestors!
Am I become a byeword?

ZANTHE.

My lord —

DON LEO (*to his Attendants*).

My squires, to arm me! haste,
My hatchet and Toledo rapier! Follow me!
Follow me, both!

T

18

HERNANI.

DON CARLOS (*checking him*).

Be patient, Duke ; your prowess
 Or ours is not the question now. My business
 Concerns the death of Maximilian,
 Late Emperor of Germany.

DON LEO.

D' ye mock me ?

DON CARLOS.

No, Duke.

[*Throws off his mantle, and exposes his face by raising
 his hat.*]

DON LEO.

The King ! [*Kneels.*]

ZANTHE.

The King !

HERNANI (*strongly excited*).

The King of Spain !

DON CARLOS (*to DON LEO*).

Your sovereign and your friend. How now ? Don Leo,
 Is your blood still so hot ? This great event
 Hath scarcely reached me, and at once I come,
 In all expedient haste and privacy,
 To you, my well-beloved and trusty minister,
 For counsel on 't. A simple case, methinks,
 To stir so loud a clamour.

DON LEO.

Sire, I crave

Your pardon ; but so long denied admittance —

DON CARLOS.

It was your privacy I sought ; and hearing
 A troop of lacqueys at your heels —

T)

c

*The Bridge of Sigby, Venice.**Photocourtesy by Gaudet et Cie — From Drawing by Ziem.*



Dessiné par Ziem

Photographie de V. de la C. & C.

DON LEO.

'T is true.

DON CARLOS.

Old friend, I thought to make you governor
Of Andalusia ; but whom, I pray,
Must I appoint *your* governor ?

DON LEO.

In sooth
'T is time these storms were hushed.

DON CARLOS.

Enough ; and since
This thunder-cloud is passed, we'll to our purpose.
The Emperor, my ancestor, 't is certain,
Is dead.

DON LEO.

On whom is 't thought
Will fall the election to his envied throne ?

DON CARLOS.

They name, as on the list of candidates,
A certain Duke of Saxony, and Francis —

DON LEO.

Your Highness means —

DON CARLOS.

Francis the First of France.

DON LEO.

A promising aspirant ! Where, my liege,
Hold the electors their assembly ?

DON CARLOS.

Faith,
I'm ill informed ; Aix-la-Chapelle, or Spires,
Or Frankfort, possibly.

DON LEO.

And has your Highness
(Whom Heaven still prosper) never yet himself
Thought of the empire ?

DON CARLOS.

Constantly.

DON LEO.

My liege,
'T is yours by right.

DON CARLOS.

I know it.

DON LEO.

Every right, —
Your father was Archduke of Austria,
And he who quits the purple for a shroud
Your ancestor direct.

DON CARLOS.

With all despatch
I start for Flanders ; and on my return,
De Sylva, see that you salute me Emperor.

DON LEO.

'T is well.
Yet, ere you go, let me remind you, sire,
You leave a hydra-headed foe behind
'T were better you disposed of, — the bold route
Of lawless rebels that so long have scourged
Our Arragon, and in their growing strength
Threaten to beard us in our very streets.

DON CARLOS.

The Duke of Arcos has command and power
To sweep them off —

DON LEO.

Brief quittance, sire. Their captain
Heeds little of your sweeping projects.

DON CARLOS.

Psha! In Galicia now he lurks, and soon
Must yield him to his fetters.

DON LEO.

I 've assurance
He hovers round the city.

DON CARLOS.

You 're deceived.
What matters where! To-night we lodge with you.

DON LEO (*with warmth and respect*).

A royal welcome. Ho!
The King 's our guest.
Do him all honour.

[*Fresh Attendants appear with lights ; the DUKE motions them into ranks towards the R. 2 E. DONNA ZANTHE moves cautiously towards HERNANI ; the KING observes them.*

ZANTHE (*to HERNANI*).

To-morrow, at the midnight hour, remember
You fail me not.

HERNANI (*comes down, L.*).

To-morrow.

DON CARLOS (*turning to* HERNANI).

I have done you, sir, the honour
To measure swords with you; and though I fear
That honour most unworthily conferred,
To-night I'll not betray you. Seek your safety;
I'll cover your retreat.

DON LEO (*advancing, observing* HERNANI).

Have I neglected —

DON CARLOS.

One of my suite, — a confidential follower;
I've sent him on a charge. Lead on.

[*Exeunt* DON CARLOS, DONNA ZANTHE, DON LEO, and *Attendants*, DON LEO with a flambeau before the KING,
R. 2 E. HERNANI remains.

HERNANI.

One of thy suite! thy follower! Aye, while life
Or motion in these limbs are left, by day,
By night, and step by step, I'll dog thee.
No courtier of thy train, whose slavish eye
Still strains to guess at each caprice in thine,
No parasite who waits thine issuing breath
To do it homage, till the fulsome poison
Recoil upon his nature, shall attend thee
With half so keen observance. Thy follower!
Aye, closely as thy shadow, till thyself,
Proud King, art but a shadow in my gripe,
And, spurning thee, I trample on a clod. [*Exit* R. 2 E.

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The outside of the Palace of De Sylva ; a window with a balcony, L. 2 E. ; beneath, a small door ; houses, and diverging streets ; night ; lights are seen at various windows of the palace, and a few different houses.*

JOSEPHA *enters L. door.*

JOSEPHA.

There, she sits still, and takes no heed of me ; these strange events have well-nigh turned her head. Poor lamb ! Three lovers, and such lovers too, are quite enough to turn any head that stands on female shoulders.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE, L.

ZANTHE.

Josepha ! is the King gone ?

JOSEPHA.

Gone, child ! why, did n't you see him go ?

ZANTHE.

True, true, I did, but — I know not why —
I thought he might be returned.

JOSEPHA.

Nay, sweet, you gave him but small encouragement to return ; and the poor dear Duke did so glory to see thee so cold and coy, I vow it made one's heart ache to see the good old soul so delude himself. Well, well ! at his years he ought to know better, that's a sure thing.

ZANTHE.

Josepha! spare me. It goes hard enough with me to think of him.

JOSEPHA.

Aye, marry, and 't will go harder with him when he knows the truth, as I suppose he must, soon; eh, lamb-kin? How is it to end, sweet? What is thy purpose?

ZANTHE (*her manner bewildered*).

I have none. Fate must guide me. My brain shuts out all purpose, all reflection.

JOSEPHA.

And the visits of the young cavalier —

ZANTHE.

Are at an end. With my consent he enters here no more.

JOSEPHA.

Thou'lt wed Don Leo, then?

ZANTHE.

I said not so.

JOSEPHA.

Ah! would thou hadst never said so. 'T is that he relies upon, — that thou art plighted with thy consent.

ZANTHE.

Yet, sure he does me wrong. 'T was two years since.
In all things else, 't is said, nor law nor justice
Will have the child's rash contract bind the woman.
I pledged to him the love a husband claims
Ere such a love I knew, and knowing it,
To him I feel it ne'er can be assigned.

[Crosses to L.

JOSEPHA.

Ah! 't is plain, sweet, how it was with you. His first unfaithful wife had made him wretched for many a long year. To you he was ever kind; you pitied his sadness, loved him with all a young heart's gratitude, and the old fox made the most of it.

ZANTHE.

Revile him not, nor speak thus lightly of him.

JOSEPHA.

No, truly, he is not for light treatment! The phantom Honour is the idol of his worship. Did n't he make a prisoner of the late Duchess for the brief remainder of her days? Ah, well-a-day! Don Leo is an awful man.

ZANTHE.

An awful man he is; and, kind Josepha,
It is not well, so far to have allured thee
From thy allegiance to him. Shame upon me!
But I'll be wiser. Rest to-night in safety;
The evening wanes. I would retire alone,
And bring no further sin upon thee.

JOSEPHA (*in kind reproach*).

Dost thou fear me?

ZANTHE.

No, but I love thee; and if thou lovest me,
Go to thy chamber, and come not to mine. [*Exit L. door.*]

JOSEPHA.

Alas, poor thing! I know not what is in thy head, but there is little comfort at thy heart, I fear. A woeful day it may prove for thee, when this gallant mountaineer

stopped thy runaway courser on the verge of a precipice, to lure thee to a brink more dangerous. The stern Don Leo cares little for old Joseph's loyalty; but if thine fail him, woe to us all! *[Exit L. door.]*

Enter DON CARLOS, DON HENRIQUEZ, DON MATTHIAS, and DON RICARDO in cloaks, R. U. E.

DON CARLOS.

That is her chamber, friends. 'T was there Don Carlos, Whose mind must needs range empires, found his person Suddenly circumscribed to three feet square. That is her window; and beneath, the door Sacred to love. Can she have changed her purpose? The hour is nigh. Yet lights are everywhere, Save there where I would have them.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

I ponder still, my liege, on your strange rival, Who, as you well conjecture, may be captain Of these marauding rebels.

DON MATTHIAS.

Heard you his name, my liege?

DON CARLOS.

I nothing heard
Distinctly; 't was Romani, or Fernani, —
Some name with such an ending.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

'T was Hernani.

DON CARLOS.

It was so.

DON MATTHIAS.

Then 't was he.

DON RICARDO.

Their chief, Hernani.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

And could your Highness let him thus escape?

DON CARLOS (*turning on him with a grave look*).

D'ye question me, my lord?

[*They withdraw in deference and respect.*]

You'd set a price

Upon his head, perhaps? Yet it becomes

His shoulders. Nor can we condemn his taste.

Ambitious as it is, so we can cheat him

Of his fair mistress, to his head he's welcome.

Now, friends, be firm, resolute. Her signal

I know. The lovers both must be secured.

We'll share the task, — that is, you'll understand,

The lady shall be mine, and yours the bandit.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

You've chosen well, my liege.

DON CARLOS.

Bar his approach, at least. Away! my task

I'll answer for.

DON MATTHIAS.

Your Highness will confess 't is not hardest.

[*Exeunt RICARDO, MATTHIAS, and HENRIQUEZ, R. U. E.*]

DON CARLOS.

Now for her signal.

[*Claps his hands thrice deliberately, and DONNA ZANTHE opens the casement and appears at the balcony.*]

ZANTHE.

Is it you, Hernani?

DON CARLOS.

I dare not answer her.

[Repeats the signal.

ZANTHE.

I come! I come!

[Closes the casement, and the lights disappear.

DON CARLOS.

With three such sentinels we are secure
Of elbow-room to woo her royally.

ZANTHE enters from the little door beneath, L.

ZANTHE.

Hernani!

[Going to R., he advances briskly towards her, L.; she lets fall the light.

Heavens! 't is not his step; I 'm sure on 't.

[Endeavours to retreat; he catches her in his arms.

DON CARLOS.

My life!

ZANTHE.

'T is not his voice! I 'm lost!

DON CARLOS.

Fear nothing.

It is a voice will pledge to thee a heart
The truest, the tenderest, — a voice of power
To crown thy every wish; nay, to crown thee!

ZANTHE.

The King!

DON CARLOS.

And would'st thou spurn his fond embrace?
He is thy slave. A kingdom, and a life
Of love he offers thee for thine.

ZANTHE (*struggling*).

Help! help!

DON CARLOS.

'Gainst whom? You deal not with a robber now,
But with a king,—the foe and scourge of robbers.

ZANTHE.

'T is false! Thou art the robber, that would seek
By lawless force what honour hath denied thee!
Thou stain'st my cheek with shame, but 't is for thee,—
For thee and thy foul purpose. Were it honest,
Would'st thou at midnight snare a helpless woman?
And darest thou talk of robbers,—thou! *Hernani*
Is noble, generous; and I tell thee, King,
Were each man station'd where his heart should place
him,
The sceptre would be his, the dagger thine.
Was not my father noble?

DON CARLOS.

I will make
Thee greater. Thou shalt be a queen —
An empress.

ZANTHE.

'T were treason! I have pledged, as woman will,
My life and soul in bond irrevocable
By human power tho' tongue had never shaped it;
And rather would I share *Hernani's* fortune
Ev'n at its bleakest,—cold abandonment,
War, exile, beggary, and worst of all,
The scourge, great King, of thine immaculate justice,—
Than be enthroned an empress with an emperor.

DON CARLOS.

You hate me, then?

ZANTHE.

I love you not. [*Crosses to L.*]DON CARLOS (*with increased violence*).

No matter!

ZANTHE.

Oh, heavens! my liege, behold me then thy suppliant.
 Be gracious, merciful. What! when around thee
 Beauty in thronging constellation shines,
 Courting thy love, and eager to requite it?
 And what has he, — the branded, the proscribed?
 Canst thou not cull thy joys
 Throughout thy rich Castile and Arragon?
 And would'st thou, sovereign lord
 Of this wide world of treasures, rob an outcast
 Of one poor heart, who has but that on earth?

DON CARLOS (*still dragging her*).

Thy words are breath to fire! Hence, hence, *my* world
 For thee and for thy love; claim what thou wilt.

ZANTHE.

I ask but one thing.

DON CARLOS.

Speak.

ZANTHE (*snatching a dagger from his belt*).

I have it.

Now.

[*The KING falls back.*]

Advance one step —

DON CARLOS.

I' faith, I marvel not

You love a rebel. Yet 't were sin to fear thee.

[*Inclining to her.*]

Zanthe and Don Carlos.

Etched by Léon Boisson. — From Painting by A. Michelena.



ZANTHE.

Forbear! or on my soul, you lightly hold
Your life and mine. Hernani! ho! Hernani!

DON CARLOS.

Your cries are vain. I have at hand to aid me
Three of my followers.

HERNANI (*suddenly appearing from R. U. E.*).

One you have forgotten.

[*The KING turns suddenly round. HERNANI stands motionless before him, enveloped in his cloak, his hat slightly raised. DONNA ZANTHE, with an exclamation of joy, rushes and clings to him.*

Heaven knows, great sir,
I could have wished our place of meeting now
Had been at fitter distance from the last.

ZANTHE (R.).

Nay, let us fly from him.

HERNANI (*calmly*).

There is no haste.

DON CARLOS.

Ho, there, cravens!

HERNANI.

Your friends are in the power of mine.
Our quarrel here must end, and 'twixt us two.
What! you have laid a hand of violence
Upon a noble lady! King of Spain,
'T was a rash act, and not a valiant one.

DON CARLOS.

Peace, thou fantastic ruffian! Dost flatter thee
We meet as yesternight?

HERNANI.

And if we meet not as equals,
Dost flatter thee pre-eminence is thine?
Know'st thou the throng of swelling thoughts that now
Uplift me o'er the mighty space between us?
Thou art a king! and what is he whose grasp
[*Seizing the KING's arm.*

Now mocks thy majesty. Hear then, and know me.
Thy father was the murderer of mine —
I hate thee! Thou hast despoiled and branded me —
I hate thee! Thou would'st rob me of *her* love,
For whose sake I could have forgotten thee —
I hate thee! From my heart's deep core I hate thee!

DON CARLOS.

Madman!

HERNANI.

In an unlook'd-for hour you cross'd us.
To-night I sought her, and again I found *you*;
But in thy treacherous snare thyself entangled,
Thou art beleaguér'd, and must do me right.
Stand to thy guard! [*The KING stirs not.*] Do I defy a
coward?

DON CARLOS.

One way alone I'll do thee right. I scorn thee!

HERNANI.

Scorn me! Is it because
Placed, darkling, in my power, I have forgone
A bravo's justice for a soldier's, thou
Believest my vengeance air-blown as a woman's?
I'll not be baffled. Draw —

DON CARLOS.

Against thee? Never!
I am king. I will not fight with thee.

HERNANI.

Do you forget —

DON CARLOS.

Last night we both were maskers ;
To-day discloses us for what we are.
Thou art my rebel subject ; I am thy king.

HERNANI.

You rave ; yet urge me not.

DON CARLOS.

I spurn thy challenge.
Whistle thy gang. Let all your daggers strike !
The combat I disdain.

HERNANI.

Of this I dreamed not.

DON CARLOS.

What ! dreamed you then a king could be entrapp'd
To play thy game, and aid thy broad imposture,
Gild o'er thy crimes, and, stain'd with blood and plunder,
Assist thee with a garish cloak of chivalry
To dazzle a weak woman ? No ; that cloak
I strip, and leave thee in thy naked infamy.
Stick to thy trade. Give place, or, bravo, stab me !

HERNANI (*inwardly struggling*).

Hell !

ZANTHE (*stopping him*).

My Hernani ! Wilt thou kill the King ?
That King so long the friend of the De Sylvas !
For thine honour
(Which if his words wrong, let not thine own deeds),
Fly ! fly ! and heed him not.

HERNANI (*to the KING, after a struggle and convulsive movement of his sword*).

You are free.

The time may come when we may meet as equals,
Each at the head of armies. [*The KING smiles.*] Aye,
an army.

My gathering bands may form as well as thine;
For what (save numbers only) hath conferr'd
That prouder name on many a robber band
Whose deeds make us illustrious crusaders.
And kings, to spoil and trample on the weak,
By fifty thousands lead their armies forth,
Who hang up modest fifty as banditti.
Pass, but be sure you will not be forgotten.

DON CARLOS (*crosses R.*).

Gramercy! Sir, nor you; and your forbearance,
I warn you still, is at your utmost peril.
I hold thee for a traitor and a rebel,
If nothing worse. My refuge is at hand,
With power unlimited, to crush at once
Thy boast and thee. Yet with this notice, signor,
As tranquilly I turn my back on thee
As if so fierce a foe had never been. [*Exit R.*]

HERNANI.

What trial more than this can nature prove?
Do I not love thee now?

ZANTHE.

Too well; and yet
The King, whate'er his threats, is ever generous.

HERNANI.

The King hath rarely said the thing he means not,
Nor lingers in the act. Ere this the cry

Is up. The lion is abroad ; and soon,
Martial and civil, grooms, lacqueys, magistrates,
And men at arms, will run an eager race
To win the price of this devoted head.

ZANTHE.

Oh, Heaven defend us ! Let us fly at once.

HERNANI.

Nay, not together ; let my hastening doom
Restore thee to thy safety. Here we part.

ZANTHE.

Is this to stab me with reproach ?

HERNANI.

Reproach ?
Oh ! though the only light that yet hath cheer'd,
How blessedly ! my dark and wintry fortune, —
Sweet comforter ! most pure and beautiful,
That thro' their burning channels still can draw
These tears, — not an eternity of torture
Should wring from me one bitter thought of thee,
Or any but of love, of boundless love.

ZANTHE.

Alas !

HERNANI.

But when assured, and in my sight the scaffold
Stands the black boundary of hope and fortune,
Thy path be far from mine.

ZANTHE.

Then thou art false, —
To me more cruel than thy foes to thee.
I cannot leave thee.

HERNANI.

Nay, this is not well.

The storm that rives the mountain pine may spare
The flower that courts its shelter. Shall I drag
Thee down a gulf that yawns before me, blot
Thy maiden fame with foul disgrace? Away!
Preserve thy life and honour. Angels guard thee!

ZANTHE.

For what — if I abandon thee? Plead not
Against my right; no, I will cling to thee
Till the last pulse hath fluttered at thy heart,
And wrap me in thy winding sheet.

HERNANI (*breaking from her to R.*).

Return!

ZANTHE.

Am I cast from thee? Here then will I perish.
[*Falls on the ground.*]

HERNANI (*alarmed at her situation*).

So desperate, noble Zanthé!
Since thou wilt have it so, we will not part.
Hallowed and heaven-protected, we will not fear.
Steals not now
Peace to thy bosom? Peerless Donna Zanthé,
We still are blessed! Look brightly thro' thy tears.

ZANTHE.

I do; I am blest. [*The bells of the city are heard ringing
an alarm.*] Ha! the tocsin!

HERNANI.

No, it is our nuptial peal.

[*The clamour increases. Shouts are heard, R.; a glare of
torches through the streets.*]

ZANTHE.

Rise, rise, and fly ! The city 's roused ! The glare
Approaches !

HERNANI.

'T is to light us to our bridal.

ZANTHE.

To light thee to thy tomb.

HERNANI.

My lovely bride !

Thus will we give them welcome.

[Clasps her with his left arm.]

A MOUNTAINEER enters, with drawn sword, R.

MOUNTAINEER.

We are surprised.

The Sbirri, the Alcaldi and their followers

Beset us closely.

ZANTHE.

And I have delayed thee !

HERNANI.

Rally as you may. I follow.

[Cries without, R.] This way ! upon them. *[Shouts, R.]*

HERNANI (to ZANTHE).

Since it must be so,

Farewell !

ZANTHE.

You rush upon destruction. Here

With me you still may shelter.

[Points to door, L.]

HERNANI.

And desert my gallant friends ?

[Going, R.]

ZANTHE (*calling*).

Hernani! Thou wilt strive to save thee!

HERNANI (*returning*).

Aye, by this holy pledge I now first dare
To print upon thy cheek. Farewell. [*Kisses her cheek.*
[*Shouts and clash of swords continued till end of act.*

ZANTHE.

Farewell!

[HERNANI *rushes out, R.* *She totters, exhausted, towards the portico.* JOSEPHA *enters from the door under the balcony, L.* ZANTHE *falls against a pillar of the portico.* JOSEPHA *hastens to her assistance, and the curtain falls quickly.*

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Interior of the Castle of De Sylva, in the mountains of Arragon. A gallery of family portraits, which are surrounded with ducal coronets, and gilt escutcheons. A lofty gothic door in the flat. Between each portrait a panoply of the armour of different ages.*
DONNA ZANTHE, in white, standing before a table, R. C. DON LEO in a splendid dress, and seated in a chair of state.

DON LEO.

The rich atonement for repining years
At length arrives. Most dear and gentle cousin,
Long my sole comfort, now my better self,
To-day will give thee rank above all dames
That bear De Sylva's name.
Where are thy smiles? I fear
Thou hast not yet forgiven the wrong I did thee,
That I should bring a blush upon that cheek
With base suspicion; thou art pale and sad!
Much it hath grieved me, more perchance than thee;
Yet, certes, they were there; two gallant forms
Of men, at midnight, in thy chamber, Zanthé,
Was not a sight to mend an old man's rest
Who was to call thee wife.

ZANTHE.

It is forgotten;
Let me entreat you speak of it no more.

DON LEO.

It will no more be questioned, — trust me, never.
I must have charity for some weak thoughts
My sixty years have brought me. Time, I fear,

Hath scored them with unsparing hand. Yet do I love
thee
As light and shallow youth can never love.
As yet there are no wrinkles at my heart;
And ever gladdened with thy grace and beauty
It will forever beat with young delight.

ZANTHE.

Alas!

DON LEO.

Or when it faintlier throbs, 't is thy
Fond care will soothe it till it throb no more.

ZANTHE.

My lord, that care perhaps may not be mine.

DON LEO.

Not thine!

ZANTHE.

The young oft rush into the tomb,
Leaving the old still lingering on its verge,
To close it o'er them.

DON LEO.

Fie on these sad thoughts!
Dost thou forget thou art a blooming bride?
Do maidens talk of tombs, while holy men
Prepare for them the altar? We detain them.
Wilt not attire thee?

ZANTHE.

There is time enough.

DON LEO.

Not so.

ISADORE, *a page, enters at C. doors.*
What says our Isadore?

ISADORE.

A lowly stranger, as I think a pilgrim,
Entreats asylum in the castle.

DON LEO.

Grant it.

He comes in happy time. Whoe'er he be,
For rest or safety, weary or in peril,
Seek he our shelter, it shall be to him
Refuge assured. So tell him, and so pledge
Our hospitality. Stay! what news
Of our marauding rebels?

ISADORE.

They are routed.
Some taken, many killed. Their bold Hernani,
The lion of the hills, beset on all sides,
Has no escape.

ZANTHE (*R. aside*).

I sink.

DON LEO.

How know you this?

ISADORE.

From some employed to hunt them down. The King
Himself pursues their chief. A thousand crowns
Are offered for his head; but 't is the rumour
He is among the slain.

ZANTHE (*aside*).

And I still live!
Hernani!

DON LEO.

So, that were the better chance,
Haply for him, and, doubtless, for his hunters.
(To ZANTHE) Still tarrying? Josepha waits. I pr'ythee
let her
Adorn thee fitly.

ZANTHE (*aside*).

Fitly, were in weeds, —

Weeds for my widowed heart.

[*Exit* ZANTHE R.]

ISADORE.

Would my lord ask —

DON LEO.

No more; admit the stranger, crave his pardon

For thy delay. And, Isadore, that done,

Convey the casket destined for thy mistress.

[*Exit* ISADORE, C.]

I'll have her decked like a Madonna; thus,

With that dark eye so ample, soft, and saintly,

Half veiled beneath its deep and downcast lid,

Our pilgrim may kneel down and do her homage.

His coming 'bodes us good; it pleases me.

The stranger ever at my gate is welcome, —

To-day most warmly.

[HERNANI *appears at the great entrance, C., disguised as a pilgrim.*

HERNANI.

To my noble lord

All peace and happiness.

DON LEO.

As much to you.

Free cheer, true welcome, and, if such your need,

Inviolat asylum here are yours.

You are —

HERNANI.

A pilgrim.

DON LEO.

From Armillas?

HERNANI.

No.

That way was strife and bloodshed, and I shunn'd it.

DON LEO.

Whither speed you then ?

HERNANI.

To Saragossa.

DON LEO.

With holy vows to thy protecting saint,
No doubt ; or to our Lady del Pilar.

HERNANI.

With such intent, and to our Lady's shrine.

DON LEO.

If any wrong oppress thee, done or suffered,
Within these walls forget it, while they grin
With jubilee, and from all outward harm
Protect you as they shall. I may anon
Enquire your name and fortunes, which concern me
Only to serve you as I may. You are
My guest, what else I care not.
My bride !

[Crosses R. HERNANI is startled.]

[DONNA ZANTHE enters in her bridal attire, R., Attendants, etc. Two Females bearing a velvet cushion, on which is placed a casket of polished steel, richly carved, which they place on a table. It contains the coronet of a duchess, necklace, bracelets, and a set of diamonds.]

DON LEO.

Behold our lady of the castle.
Whate'er of our devotions earth may claim,
Here, pilgrim, may be well bestowed.
Fair saint !

[Taking her hand.]

Approach. What's here? A naked hand?
Where are thy rings — thy gems — thy coronet?

HERNANI (*in desperation throws off his disguise*).
Who's for a thousand crowns? Here stands Hernani.

ZANTHE (*aside*).
Alive!

HERNANI.
Come all, behold the man so famed,
The head so prized!
Duke, you would know my name, — it is Hernani.
Is't not a brave one? Introduce your guest
At court; he'll serve you better there than all
Your scars —

ZANTHE.
He's lost!
Regard him not. He raves.
[*Crosses to L., and aside to him.*]
Dear Hernani!

HERNANI.
Ah!
Some one of this good company recalls
And names me. Yes, I am Hernani. Since
There's marriage here, I am for wedding, too.
My bride elect, the Moor's dark angel, Death!
She's cold but constant, Duke.

DON LEO (*in a firm tone*).
I understand you not, but yet believe
There is no cause for desperation here.
The man who aims at thy head risks his own.
My guest, and in the name of Heaven received
Beneath my roof, Hernani, though you be,
These walls are compromised unharmed to hold you;

Hernani throws off his Disguise.
Etched by Léon Boisson. — From Painting by A. Michelen.



J. M. Flanagan del.

Wm. Russell sc.

And till my head surmount a breathless trunk,
 For every hair of thine I'll warrant it. [To ZANTHE.
 My best beloved, retire awhile. [To Suite.] All follow me,
 To arm my vassals and secure my gates.

[Exit DUKE and Attendants, C. DONNA ZANTHE seems
 to follow her waiting-women, who go off, R., then stops
 and turns. HERNANI gazes on her steadfastly, but
 with strong emotion.

HERNANI.

I give you joy, fair Duchess. On my life
 Thou'rt furnished splendidly. A casket too.
 [Taking it from the table.
 Gems in reserve, most brilliant and complete ;
 Diamonds and pearls ! Rings, chains, and coronet !
 No bauble left to sigh for. Precious store,
 And well bestowed on love so pure, so lofty. [Crosses R.

ZANTHE (*taking a dagger from the casket*).

You have not searched it through.

HERNANI (*starting, then throwing himself at her feet*).

Forgive me !

ZANTHE.

This
 I snatched from Carlos, when he would have had me
 Partake his throne, which I refused for one
 Who thus requites me !

HERNANI.

Strike it to his heart !
 From thy hand merited, from thy hand welcome.

ZANTHE.

That hand can only raise thee from thy penitence.
 The worst of wrongs, from thee, my heart can pardon, —

Much more the wild and frantic thoughts that drive thee,
For my sake, to despair.

HERNANI.

Oh ! ever merciful,
Devoted, measureless in love and truth !
'Tis time this untamed savage should resign thee
To that benign and gentle peace he found
The native inmate of thy bosom.

ZANTHE.

No. For thy woes it bleeds,
But not thy cruelty. I should have died —

HERNANI.

For me !

ZANTHE.

For whom, if not for thee ? *[In a flood of tears.*

HERNANI.

Still tears,
And I the cause ! and none will punish me, —
Not e'en my much abused and noble host.
I cannot shun, yet wherefore do I haunt thee ?
I know not how to love, yet love to madness.
My friends are dead, or in their dungeons. I
Am left to be indeed a scourge — a ruffian !

ZANTHE (*with ardent abandonment*).

No, thou art good and generous, and with all
My heart I love thee. *[Falls on his neck.*

HERNANI.

Carlos, strike ! for earth
Can yield no more.

*[They are linked in each other's arms, absorbed in looks of
love and tenderness.*

Enter DON LEO, C. ; he stands amazed and motionless.

DON LEO.

And this is then the world
I live in ! this is now the recompense
Of hospitality ! and this the man
Who, in the name of Christian brotherhood,
Demands our shelter ! Thou besotted host,
Unbar thy gates, and let thy heart be opened
To give the stranger welcome in his need ;
Arouse thy pride, and string thy sinews up
To champion him, at sixty years ;
Gird on thy trustiest weapon, man thy towers
To fence him in his danger ; venture all
For him, and thus much will he do for you !
Bandits and murderers have I seen, who died
Scoffers, impenitent and unconfessed,
But never man betraying thus his host
Who had not trembled. Flower of old Castilians !
[Addressing the portraits.
What man is he who thus profanes your presence ?

HERNANI.

One who devoutly bends in veneration
For them and thee. The outrage I have done you
Defies alike or patience or redress ;
But I have blood, a hot ungoverned tide,
O'erswelling bound and barrier — let it gush !
Cleanse thy polluted sanctuary, and be
The rest forgotten !

ZANTHE.

Nay ! Strike rather here !
Hence was the sin, hence flow the expiation.
This heart, defiled with pity for the brave,
Be the peace-offering to thine anger.

DON LEO.

Neither.

It is not thus the sacrifice is made
To my insulted honour. Leave us.

ZANTHE.

Wherefore?

That look I know; it 'bodes some fatal purpose, —
Death or a living sepulchre! Forbear,
For he is as noble as thyself: deserving
Thy love as mine.

DON LEO (*roused*).

Thine?

ZANTHE.

No, no!

DON LEO.

'T is enough. [*A trumpet sounds. LEO draws his sword.*]

Enter ISADORE, C.

What sound is that?

ISADORE.

My lord, the King in person,
Attended by a troop of archers, claims
Admittance by his herald's trumpet.

DON LEO (*calmly*).

Claims!

ZANTHE.

The King! 'T is fatal!

ISADORE.

Our delay offends him; but your command —

DON LEO.

Well, for the King we'll waive it;
Admit him.

ZANTHE.

He is lost!

[*Exit ISADORE, C.*

[*DON LEO goes to a large picture, L., of himself, which is the last on the left, and presses a spring, when the picture opens like a door, and discovers a recess in the wall.*

HERNANI (*not observing him*).

He triumphs!

DON LEO.

No.

[*Points to the recess L.*

HERNANI.

Ah!

DON LEO.

Enter.

HERNANI.

Gladly.

Rescued from him, dispose me as you will.

[*Enters the recess L.; it closes on him.*ZANTHE (*exultingly*).

Does he relent — protect him still!

Enter ISADORE, C.

ISADORE.

His Highness the King.

[*A flourish of drums and trumpets. ZANTHE throws on her veil. The folding doors open and the KING enters in warlike attire, followed by Arquebusiers, Archers, Gentlemen-at-Arms, etc.; he advances deliberately, C., and fixes on DON LEO, R., a look of anger and distrust. The DUKE meets and salutes him with profound respect. The KING, on approaching, raises his head abruptly, and as a rebuke.*

DON CARLOS.

How comes it, cousin, that to-day
 Your bolts and bars are so tenacious? Why
 This watch and ward, question, and hostile parley?
 Your falchion, too, still glittering in your grasp!
 I thought it rusty.

[*The DUKE goes to speak; the KING stops him by an imperial gesture.*

Put it up. Are we
 Encountered like a troop of turban'd foes?
 Am I a Saib, a Mahomet, or Carlos,
 That your portecullis falls at my approach?

DON LEO.

My liege —

DON CARLOS (*to his Attendants*).

Secure the keys. Let every door
 Be guarded strongly. Is it here I find
 Expiring treason nourished and restored?
 Of that devouring fire that long has blazed
 Even in our faces, yet a spark remains;
 Where is it smouldering, to be fann'd and foster'd?
 'T is here. The outlaw chief is in the castle.

DON LEO.

My liege, 't is true.

DON CARLOS.

Surrender him, or wear
 His chains thyself. Choose.

DON LEO.

My election's easy.
 To take *me* fettered or to leave me free,
 Is the sole choice I can accord your Highness.

DON CARLOS.

Defer your pleasantry. I trifle not.
Bring forth your prisoner; I must have him; think on't.

[*The DUKE crosses his arms and pauses in brief deliberation; then raises his head and leads the KING to the most ancient of the portraits, L. U. E. DONNA ZANTHE watching him with great agitation.*

DON LEO.

Sire, by your gracious leave, behold the first,
The founder, of our race, Don Silvias, —
The father of its glory. Thrice in Rome,
Still great, was he elected consul, and recalled
The days when she was greatest. Next to him
Stands Ruy Gomez, worthy to succeed him, —
Grand master of St. James and Calatrava.
Three hundred standards,
In thirty battles fought and won, he made
His trophies and memorial. For the king
He conquered Moril, Suez, Antiquera,
And died in poverty. Salute him, sire.

[*He himself uncovers and bends in salutation; the KING exhibits constant impatience; DON LEO passes to another.*

His son, Don Gaspar, follows, — the reproachless;
Amidst corruption, incorruptible;
Whose hand to touch had sanctified an oath.
Your patience, — for I will not multiply
An echo of renown still equal, still
The highest! Here's my father, — undegenerate!
Friendship's proud champion! With six hundred spears
His friend Don Alvar Giron he redeemed
From hostile thousands.

DON CARLOS.

I demand my prisoner.

DON LEO.

Show me, sire, but one of these
Had soiled his honour and betrayed his guest.

DON CARLOS.

Hernani!

DON LEO.

Here is another yet. His son, myself,
[*Pointing to his own portrait.*]
Has dared take place beside him, and must not
Disgrace him.

DON CARLOS.

The rebel's head or yours.

DON LEO.

For surety, sire,
Take that within your reach.

DON CARLOS.

Beware of both. [*To his Suite*]
From topmost tower to deepest dungeon, search
The castle through.

DON LEO.

My castle, like its lord,
Is firm and faithful, and will keep our secret.

DON CARLOS.

This, to thy King!

DON LEO.

This, and a brief addition. [*With firm resolution.*]
From base to battlement, till stone from stone

Be sundered, and their master limb from limb,
Master he will be, and his guest secure.

DON CARLOS.

Is 't resolved?

DON LEO.

It is.

DON CARLOS.

Arrest him!

[Guards disarm him. ZANTHE throws up her veil.]

ZANTHE (R.)

Hold! Carlos, the brave, the great!
You are a wicked king;
Nor have a true and noble Spanish heart,
Like him you seek, or him you would oppress.

DON CARLOS.

Judgment so harsh ne'er uttered voice so gentle.
[Approaches her and lowers his tone.]
I am what you have made me,— will be still.
If you would teach me mercy, let me learn it
From your example, not your precepts, Donna.
Still to be cruel, where you look for kindness,
Flatters the saucy satirist alone,
Who calls your sex unreasonable.

ZANTHE.

Sire,
Kings are no traffickers in grace and bounty,
But deal it unconditioned, or 't is none.

DON CARLOS.

Be it so,
You shall prevail. Release him. Brave De Sylva,
My long esteem, and a soft influence here,

Still shake our stern resolve. We cannot see you
In Spanish hands a captive ; well assured
Your loyalty will suffer brief suspense.
Meantime, we 'll only take, by way of hostage,
Your kinsmaid here, — your Donna Zanthe.

DON LEO.

Take her.
Only take —

ZANTHE.

Me !

DON CARLOS.

Fair maid, you go with us.

DON LEO.

No more ! Oh, admirable clemency !
Most gracious monarch, who can thus respect
A servant's head to wring his heart !

DON CARLOS.

A choice
Remains with thee,—your Donna Zanthe,
Or your vile refugee.

DON LEO.

He must remain.

ZANTHE (*flies to DON LEO*).

Oh, save me !

DON CARLOS.

Trust me ; *you* have nought to fear.

ZANTHE (*aside—recovering her thoughts*).

It may be not ; and those I go to shield
May die ! It is enough. I follow you.

DON CARLOS.

You're wise, and may confide in me.

ZANTHE (*emphatically*).

I will.

[*Goes to the casket, takes the dagger and conceals it in her bosom.*]

DON CARLOS (*aside*).

'T was inspiration! [*To her.*] Come, my gentle hostage,
What seek you there?

ZANTHE.

Sire, 't is a valued token
I would not part from.

DON CARLOS.

You make me curious;
May I not see a toy so prized?

ZANTHE.

Ere long
You may. It is not now a time. [*To DON LEO.*] Farewell.
[*She gives her hand to DON CARLOS. They are about to go when DON LEO, who had remained absorbed, bursts into a paroxysm of despair.*]

DON LEO.

My Zanthé! Heaven and earth! Down with my walls!
Shatter them down, and crush me! What remains
When she is gone? Leave *her*, and take all else.

DON CARLOS.

My prisoner then.

DON LEO (*dropping his head, and after great agitation raising his clasped hands towards the portraits*).

You are relentless. [*To the KING.*]

DON CARLOS.

Fixed!

[DON LEO *advances slowly towards his portrait.* ZANTHE
watches him with breathless anxiety.

ZANTHE.

I am chilled!

DON LEO (*nearly reaching the spot, and again looking up*).

Lo! every eye

Flashes indignant lightning while I pause.

Base falterer! Suspense should damn thee — [*Struggles.*]

No,

The pang is past! Take her, and leave me still

My proud inheritance.

DON CARLOS.

Even make the most of it.

Heaven speed you, cousin.

[*Flourish of drums and trumpets. Exeunt KING, ZANTHE,
 and Attendants, c.*

DON LEO.

[*Watches them in wild emotion for a moment, grappling
 for his dagger, then returns, gasping, and remains
 awhile motionless; then looking round, and finding
 himself alone, withdraws two swords from a canopy,
 measures and places them on a table; then proceeds to
 the spring and opens the recess.*

Come forth!

HERNANI *enters from panel, L.*

Thou'rt safe. My honour stands to thee

Clear and acquitted. What is due from thee,

Thou know'st. Select [*Pointing to the swords.*] and let us
 hence,

HERNANI.

Contend with thee in arms! So foul a deed
Felon ne'er died for.

DON LEO.

Thou know'st my wrongs, and what alone can right them.
What! closely linked with thee, caressing! loving!
The thought for ever stinging me! 'T were madness!
'T is time, — 't is fit — 't is the sole course of honour
That one of us should die. Such lots are drawn
By brave men with their swords, as ours must be;
Or thy refusal be thy forfeiture, —
For so, by Heaven, I'll hold it!

HERNANI.

Hold it so.

DON LEO.

Thou'rt warned.

HERNANI.

I am. The blood of my brave friends
Reproaches me the life you saved. To them
And thee let it atone. The prize is thine;
Be mine the forfeit.

DON LEO.

Make thy last prayer.

HERNANI.

To thee I make it: To behold once more,
And breathe a blessing on thy Donna Zanthe.

DON LEO.

Behold her!

HERNANI.

Nay, let me but hear her voice
Once, and no more!

DON LEO.

Was thy concealment then
So closed against the passing scene ?

HERNANI.

For thy sake
I sought its inmost depths.

DON LEO.

And nothing heard ?

HERNANI.

Nothing. Yet, what imports it to my boon ?

DON LEO.

The King demanded thee or Donna Zanthé.

HERNANI.

And bore her hence ?

DON LEO.

For thee my roof was sacred.

HERNANI.

Madman ! she's lost ; he loves her !

DON LEO.

Loves her !

HERNANI.

Aye, as a lewd and reckless tyrant loves, —
To laugh at thee and me — dishonour her.

DON LEO.

Curse on his treachery ! Confiding fool !
Was this his midnight purpose ! Ho ! within !

[Attendants appear at c.

Let all my followers, mounted at the best,

In arms attend me quick.

[Exeunt Attendants, c.

HERNANI.

And for my boon,
Give but a band of them to my command,
On one great hazard more to set my hate
Against this ravisher, thy Donna Zanthe
To rescue or revenge; by the big throb
That shakes thy own proud heart, oh grant but this!
And should my life escape the desperate issue,
Still, still 't is thine.

DON LEO.

Trust thee! Thou vindicate her!

HERNANI.

Thou hast my bond.

DON LEO.

Unpledged — unwitnessed.

HERNANI.

No;

To these thy ancestors I make appeal, —

[*Then pointing upwards.*

To mine, a race as noble as thine own.

And for a pledge take this, and hear my words.

[*Gives his horn.*

Whate'er befalls me, at whatever time

Or place thou would'st demand my life, 't is thine,

And claim it. Only sound this horn, —

I sha'n't mistake it, — and thy will be done.

DON LEO.

Thy hand! One law then rules us; I will trust thee.

[*Exeunt, C.*

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *The monumental caverns of Aix-la-Chapelle. Spacious vaults of Lombard architecture, low and massy pillars, with ornamental capitals. On the right the tomb of Charlemagne, with a small low door of brass, the inscription "Karolo Magno" rendered conspicuous by the light of a lamp, which is suspended singly from the centre of the vaults. The eye is lost in the undefined depths of the Arcades.*

Enter CARLOS and RICARDO, the latter leading the way with a lantern, L. U. E.

DON RICARDO.

We have now, my liege, wound through the murky labyrinth. Here, no doubt, the traitors will assemble; and here is your chosen concealment.

DON CARLOS.

We'll use it anon. Thanks to our diligence and the speed of our horses, we are far in advance of their appointed hour. And this, then, is to be the council hall of conspiracy? They'll sharpen their daggers on the tomb of Charlemagne, as if Carlos of Castile were unworthy to succeed him. Your list of these formidable conspirators.

DON RICARDO.

'Tis here, my liege, with the exception of two who have lately reinforced them, and who appear to be father and son; but their names I know not.

DON CARLOS.

We may soon engrave them on their monument for public information. But in thus disposing of our pigmy

foes, what is our dependence on our friends? The empire, Count, the empire! The crisis of its fate is near at hand.

DON RICARDO.

The council, sire, is at this moment deliberating. You will succeed.

DON CARLOS.

Three voices, as I think, would secure me. Three suffrages! Could I but purchase them for as many cities, — Ghent, Toledo, Salamanca. In Spain or Flanders let them make their choice, and they shall have the richest and the proudest.

DON RICARDO.

'T were a tempting bribe, sire.

DON CARLOS.

'T is nothing, Count, — a trifle. [*Tapping him familiarly.*] Cities, my sagacious friend, may be recovered; the empire once lost becomes a forlorn hope. [RICARDO *puts on his hat.*] Your hat, sir!

DON RICARDO.

My liege, you have touched and familiarly accosted me. I am a grandee of Spain, *ipso facto*.

DON CARLOS.

Ha, ha, ha! You are learned in the law, Count, and prompt at illustration. We venture not to litigate your claim, and therefore, grandee, we must admit you. Our Donna Zanthe, how has she sustained her journey?

DON RICARDO.

Marvellously well, sire, since the worthy duchess you gave her in charge to, and her own experience, have assured her of your Highness's chivalrous forbearance.

DON CARLOS.

Therein she flatters not *my* love, my lord.
But she is woman still, and should I triumph —
Have you considered our impatience, Count?
How shall we quickliest know the council's choice?

DON RICARDO.

From the cannon's mouth, my liege. The discharge of one only will announce the election of the Duke of Saxony; two will report for Francis; and three will thunder for your Highness.

DON CARLOS.

'T is well devised. They'll boldly speak the worst, unminced with flattery. And now to prepare for our conspirators, — these self-elected guardians of the state and empire! Forget not my instructions.

DON RICARDO.

I do not, my liege.

DON CARLOS.

The key of the monument.

DON RICARDO.

'T is here! [*Gives it.*]

DON CARLOS.

Now leave us, and obey our orders strictly.

[*Exit* RICARDO, R.]

DON CARLOS (*remains for a time in profound abstraction, then turns toward the tomb of Charlemagne*).

Charlemagne! mighty spirit! now enthroned
Above this coil and buzz of mortal passions,
Oh, let me commune with thee! Say, is all
Thy power, the wisdom and the mastery

Of soul, that with thy mortal nature came
 On earth, gone with it, — perished, marbled up
 With that poor dust, which balanced with the vilest,
 Nor weighs, nor values more? Let them be dumb
 Who deem so, while a heart is swelling here,
 That unrebuked, even in this awful presence,
 Dares hope to track thee in thy giant path,
 And do thy mighty deeds. Oh, empire! empire!
 Winning thee fairly shall I not desire thee?
 And having won thee, when I spot thy purple
 With sloth or slavish passion, to my bosom
 Take other counsellors than truth and justice,
 Then strip it from me, Heaven, and degrade
 The mightiest monarch to the meanest man.
 And thou, immortal spirit! by my strength;
 Sustain me; poise me on my height, and yield me
 Awhile thy sanctuary Dare I enter?
 Should I in shadowy majesty behold him,
 How would he palsy my presumption? Hark!
 What step, save mine, profanes thy sacred rest?
 [*Smiling.*] I had forgot. I wait for my assassins.
 They come.

[*He enters the tomb and closes it. Several Men enter with cautious step, enveloped in their mantles, finally meet each other, and speak in a low voice.*]

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Who goes there?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR (*carrying a lighted torch*).

Ad Augusta.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

The saints protect us!

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

The dead befriend us !

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Heaven preserve us ! *[The sound of other steps,*

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Who goes there ?

DE HARO (*in the distance, c.*).

Ad Augusta.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Saw you the Duke of Gotha ?

DE HARO.

Not an hour ago. He will not fail us.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Methinks I hear his step.

[The DUKE of GOTH A and other Conspirators advance from the obscurity in the centre.

DE HARO.

Who goes there ?

GOTHA.

Ad Augusta.

DE HARO.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

We are all met.

[The Conspirators form an open semicircle ; the first Conspirator takes the centre.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Now, Gotha, your report. What is to be the decision of the Great Council?

GOTHA.

We must prepare for the worst; 't is scarcely doubted the Duke of Saxony's humility will turn their choice on Carlos.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

We must be speedy then. 'T is said his eagerness to snatch at the imperial crown has brought him hither. Let him once wear it and he is safe; his august person becomes sacred; who dares profane it is damned past hope.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

'T is certain. We must secure the safety of our souls, and kill him without loss of time.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Down with him!

ALL.

Agreed!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Let him die! Who shall strike the blow? One arm will despatch him as well as fifty. The reserve will make all sure.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Decide it by lot.

ALL.

Aye, aye, by lot, by lot!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

About it then — your names.

[*The Conspirators write their names on tablets, then tear the leaves, fold them, and throw them into an urn forming an ornament to one of the tombs.*]

Now listen every man. To whomsoever
The glorious hazard fall, let him resolve
To strike like an old Roman, and to die
Defying block, wheel, and brand.

ALL.

We do. Draw! draw!

[*First Conspirator draws and opens the lot.*]

The name?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR (*reads*).

Hernani!

HERNANI (*starting forward, L. C.*).

'T is mine! A smile of fortune comes at last.
Friends, she has done her best for you, be sure.

DON LEO (*joining him, L. C.*).

I doubt it. You are young, light-tongued, light-witted;
Your arm may be unsteady as your head.
Transfer your right. I'll buy it at your price,
Tho' 't were your pledge here [*his horn*] and your mort-
gaged life.

HERNANI.

Your bidding must be better, Duke. My price
I need not name, — Zanthé; or Death is welcome.
My life is yours. The King's belongs to me.

DON LEO.

'T is true. Keep then the rights you have, as I
Will mine.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Aye, let him strike; we'll follow close.

HERNANI.

You may
For I will lead where following shall not shame you.

This Carlos,
 Who looks to be fifth emperor of that name,
 All despot as he is, claims better of us
 Than a base war of darkness and stilletes.

[*Draws his sword.*]

This be our weapon, then.
 Show him who strikes, and openly be hailed
 Deliverers, or die like martyrs.

DON LEO (*with impatient energy*).

No more.

He dies — no matter how to-morrow. Swear it.

ALL.

We swear!

[*A report of cannon is heard; they pause in silent suspense. The door of the tomb opens, and DON CARLOS appears, pale and anxious; a second and third report follow successively; advances to C. and stands motionless.*]

DON CARLOS.

Signors, aloof! The Emperor hears you. What
 The angry swarm plunged into night and silence,
 And all this muffled thunder but a dream!
 Strike! He is here! Carlos,
 Now the fifth emperor of that name! You dare not!
 But now your torches glared defiance. Has
 A breath extinguished them? I must supply
 Their places, then.

[*Strikes the brazen door with the key, and the vault is instantly filled with Soldiers bearing torches, and partisans; the DUKES ALCALA and PARMA at their head.*]

HERNANI.

Defend yourselves!

[*Having made an effort, he is overwhelmed with the rest, who offer no resistance, and they are disarmed.*]

DON CARLOS.

Vile company, good signor. You are lighted
Now to our mind. Is 't not a goodly blaze?
And shows one face I'm proud to look upon.

HERNANI.

And in this crowd he is but Carlos, then,
Whom juggled fancy swelled to Charlemagne.

DON RICARDO (*eagerly saluting the EMPEROR*).

Sire! let me welcome you
To empire.

DON CARLOS.

You have been trusty, and my Lord
Grandee, be now my Chamberlain!

DON RICARDO.

Without
Wait two Electors of the Golden Chamber
With their congratulations.

DON CARLOS.

Let them enter!

[*In an under tone.*] And Donna Zanthé!

[RICARDO *ushers in the KING of BOHEMIA and the DUKE of BAVARIA crowned and in costumes of state, followed by German Barons carrying the banner of the EMPEROR, — a spread eagle, with the escutcheon of Spain in the centre. They salute the EMPEROR, who salutes them in return, c.*

DUKE.

King of the Romans! sacred majesty!
We speak the general voice when we proclaim you
Worthily raised to that imperial throne
The proudest monarchs vainly have aspired to!

Frederic of Saxony, elected first,
 His conscience yielding to your sounder claim,
 In honesty of heart for you renounced it.
 Your coronation only waits your presence.

DON CARLOS.

Crowned in default of Frederic the Wise,
 We must assert his wisdom in the transfer.

[DONNA ZANTHE *appears from R. U. E.*

And Donna Zanthé comes the first to prove us.

DON RICARDO (*conducting ZANTHE*).

The Emperor.

ZANTHE (R. C.).

Emperor!

HERNANI (L. C.).

Donna Zanthé!

DON LEO (L.).

Ah!

ZANTHE.

Hernani!

DON LEO.

Me she marks not!

ZANTHE.

And a prisoner!

HERNANI.

There is no more to fear on my account!
 The worst is on my head.

ZANTHE.

May I

Implore the Emperor's gracious leave to speak,
 Doing him justice, hoping for his mercy!

DON CARLOS.

Here you are mistress.

ZANTHE.

If I have been tranquil [*Crosses to HERNANI.*],
'T is that my worst of fears were stolen from me,
Committed to a noble lady's charge,
Ne'er sought in my unwitnessed loneliness,
With honour and with due regard invested.
Had it been otherwise, I had a trinket,
You will remember, as a charm of safety.
Happy I have not been. The Emperor knows
His clemency alone can make me so.

DON CARLOS.

Lady, you go too far. Has he not sapped
The firmest pillar of my throne, — the Duke
De Sylva, prisoner by his side?

ZANTHE.

Don Leo!

DON CARLOS.

A traitor!

DON LEO.

Yes, as Julian was a traitor
To King Rodrigo.

DON CARLOS.

Alcala, let those
Of rank be parted from the rest, to die
As should become them.

[*The Guards divide the prisoners, etc., leaving HERNANI
and three on L., taking the others to R.*]

HERNANI.

Slaves! am I then left
To die with dogs? I claim my place with *them*,
And at their head. You, King, that will have me
Exalted to be worth your sword or hatchet,
Know, the same power that made thee what thou art,

Gave me a station in the sight of honour
 No jot beneath your level. Let your headsman
 Record me in his list of noble martyrs,
 Duke of Segovia and Cardona,
 Count Albatira, Marquis of Monroy,
 Viscount de Gor, and lord of lands unnumbered.
 Yes, I am John of Arragon, the exiled
 Son of a sire by thine unjustly sentenced
 To die upon the scaffold, — the sole heritage
 Reserved for me and proudly shared with him,
 For I will mount it nothing derogate.
 Before the king, the head of a grandee
 May bear its bonnet to the block.

[He puts on his hat ; the rest follow his example.]

And now, De Sylva, Lara, and the rest,
 Give place to John of Arragon ! *[Going over to them, R.]*

Dukes or counts,
 I stand before you ! Marshals, I demand
 A well graced pageant, and a spacious scaffold !

DON CARLOS.

This history we had almost forgotten ;
 Nor e'en had guessed Hernani had recalled it.

HERNANI.

A festering wound keeps memory awake !

DON CARLOS.

Then part of *my* inheritance, I find,
 Is an unreckoned fund of treasured vengeance
 For heads King Philip, it appears, chopped off
 Without consulting me.

ZANTHE (*kneeling*).

Oh, Emperor,
 Of heart imperial ! most wise and just !

Be also merciful. If he hath wronged you
 'T was rashly, not ignobly, even as I have.
 And as you pardon me, so pardon him,
 If on no better plea than that I love him ;
 That he is mine as yours the throne of empire,
 And to my heart more dear ! that we must live
 Or die together. Graciously reply.

DON CARLOS (*a moment pausing*).

Fair Donna, *you* must
 Live till this poor world
 Supply some image of thine excellence ;
 Live unobscured, a blessing and example.
 Rise, Duchess of Segovia and Cardona,
 Countess of Abatira, Viscountess
 De Gor — Your other titles, rebel ?

HERNANI.

Is it
 The *King* I hear ?

DON CARLOS.

No. 'T is the *Emperor*. [*To ZANTHE.*]
 You hold them in your lord and husband's right,
 Don John of Arragon. Your hand repays them.
[*Joins their hands.*]

ZANTHE.

Oh, heavens !

HERNANI.

My liege — [*They go to kneel ; the KING stops them.*]

DON CARLOS.

No more ! Our time is brief. [*To DON LEO.*]
 How now, old friend, you do not envy him
 Nobility, — his own inheritance ?

Zanba kneeling before Don Carlos.

Etched by Léon Boisson. — From Paintings by A. Michelina.



AZZICHELINA

DON LEO.

No, sire [*aside*] it is not his *nobility*.

HERNANI.

Oh, what a precious balm streams on the wound
That cankered at my heart! 'T is healed for ever.

ZANTHE.

My lord, my life, we suddenly inhabit
Another world.

DON CARLOS (*to himself, his hand on his heart*).

Heart! heart! be satisfied.

The head thy pantings have so long bewildered
Claims now to master thee, and bid thee rest.
Love! Love of aught save the confiding millions
Heaven to our charge consigns, awhile forget we;
Spain, Flanders, Germany, our subject-states,
Be now our mistresses, and, Donna Zanthé,
Farewell. Don John, you would have knelt;
Kneel now.

[HERNANI, *now John of Arragon; he kneels.* CARLOS
places round his neck the collar of the Golden Fleece.

Accept a bauble some will envy thee,
And rise our knight. Albe those circling arms
Still far more honour thee than our adornment, —
Those arms, the snow-white badge of innocent love,
Pure symbol of domestic bliss, which when
A king enjoys, he dying may proclaim
All else a shadow.

HERNANI.

And am I thus happy,
Standing the guiltiest among the guilty?
They have no Donna Zanthés.

DON CARLOS.

Nor shall need them.

My heart, my eyes, are full of aught but vengeance.

Your names I know not, but all here are pardoned.

DON LEO.

I pardon not so freely.

*[Sullenly disappears in the crowd.]*DON CARLOS (*to RICARDO*).

Prepare that we depart.

[RICARDO withdraws the crowd, who pass in utter silence through the vaults to R. U. E. CARLOS turns towards the tomb of Charlemagne.]

DON CARLOS.

Ascendant shade !

Have I so far invoked thee not in vain ?

Uphold me now in the momentous toils,

The thronging cares, a dense and mighty cloud,

That suddenly approaching, daunts my pride

And lours upon my grandeur. I implored thee

Greatly to guide me through my awful trust,

And thou hast whispered me, "Begin with mercy."*[Tableau.]*

ACT V.

SCENE. — *A wide and magnificent terrace in the Palace of Arragon at Saragossa, bordered by a balustrade which crosses the stage, adorned with Moorish arcades, beyond which are seen the gardens, with fountains, bowers, &c., illuminated. In the centre is a broad flight of steps leading to the gardens. The palace, with Gothic and Arabian embellishments, also illuminated on the R. U. E.; moonlight.*

DON HENRIQUEZ, DON MATTHIAS, DON RICARDO, and other
Young Nobles come forward from L. U. E., conversing with hilarity.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

By the imperial crown of King Carlos, this is a feast worthy of a prodigal's return, and of the generosity of an emperor.

DON MATTHIAS.

In sooth is it; worthy at once to celebrate a wedding and a coronation, a feast that has studded all the windows in Saragossa with bright eyes, a feast that has set every young foot and every old heart dancing with joy.

DON RICARDO.

Yes, and a few heads reeling, into the bargain.

DON MATTHIAS.

And let decorum wink at it. Never was measure filled to braver lord or fairer lady.

DON RICARDO.

Who would have dreamed our eavesdropping expedition among the rogues and rebels was to end in this? I thought it much their captain escaped with his head.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

He has proved an overmatch for us all, — even for the veteran campaigner, Don Leo, who, in my mind, for generosity and forbearance, transcends the King himself, and bears his disappointment like a sturdy old soldier.

DON RICARDO.

Not so sturdily as you may imagine. You see he has not attended the celebration of the wedding.

DON MATTHIAS.

'T is true! though the Emperor sent a special messenger to enjoin his presence. But 't is time we thought of absenting ourselves also. Hymen, methinks, beckons us away; and not a guest of us, I am confident, but will vote his entertainment superlative.

DON RICARDO.

I beg your pardon, I suspect one black ball.

DON MATTHIAS.

From whom?

DON HENRIQUEZ.

I guess; he means the black domino.

DON RICARDO.

I do.

DON MATTHIAS.

The black domino?

DON HENRIQUEZ.

Why, have n't you remarked, overhung with rainbow garlands, and surrounded by dames and cavaliers in all their brilliant varieties, a spectre in black, leaning with folded arms against a column, in grim and sullen majesty, like Pluto on the wrong side of the Styx?

DON MATTHIAS.

I saw him not.

DON RICARDO.

I marked him well. Hush! here he comes.

[*The Black Domino enters, L., and gloomily crosses the stage, absorbed, and not appearing to notice them, and disappears by the flight of steps R. U. E., every eye fixed upon him.*]

DON MATTHIAS.

Whoe'er he be, he carries it admirably.

Watch him, Henriquez.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

He is at the bottom of the terrace, and now he disappears in the orange grove.

DON RICARDO.

He has my consent to disappear altogether.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE and HERNANI, hand-in-hand, L. U. E., their noble guests and masks ranged to do them honour. A salutation of music.

HERNANI.

Dear friends, accept my grateful thanks.

ZANTHE.

And mine,
From an o'erflowing heart.

DON RICARDO.

Your happiness
Among us all hath circulated freely.

HERNANI.

You and your friends, I hope, are well bestowed
Within the palace, long to be our guests.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

While 't is the Emperor's pleasure 't will be ours.
A happy rest to both.

HERNANI.

Be yours untroubled.
Again we thank you ; and good friends, farewell.
[*The company disperse, R., accompanied by strain of music, which gradually dies away ; and during the following, the lights are extinguished and all is hushed.* HERNANI and DONNA ZANTHE remaining alone.

HERNANI.

At length we are alone once more,
The festive glare grows dim, the nimble foot
Drags weary to its rest. The song, the minstrel,
The busy tongue of mirth and gratulation, —
All, all, are hushed, and we abandoned wholly
To the sweet silence of our heart's content.
Oh, solitude most welcome !

ZANTHE.

Even so ;
For 'mid the blaze and hurry of our fortunes
I yet have seemed as one but half awaken'd
From hideous dreams, o'er dazzled by the light
That strives to break them. Now, assured, I feel
My disenthralment and my happiness.

HERNANI.

Proudly I hear you ; yes, the cloud is past.
Snatched from impending wreck, our hopes are now
Harboured in peace and love. And now, bethink thee,
The falling dews may harm thee.

ZANTHE.

How good,
How tender art thou, my beloved Hernani!

HERNANI.

Hernani! Such a man I know there was,
In discontent enshrouded, gloating on
His own dark thoughts, and loving nought beside.
And call you me by his unhallowed name?
I am Don John of Arragon.
The husband of the noble Donna Zanthé,
Envied and happy!

ZANTHE.

Fortune is but just to thee;
These rich habiliments, this badge of honour,
Who, with a better grace, may claim to wear?

HERNANI.

Still you forget my counsel. Will you not
O'ertask your spirits?

ZANTHE.

Yet one little moment;
These stealing tears are not from weariness.
One look, one parting gaze, on this fair scene —

[*From the balustrade.*]

My noble Duke of Arragon, come hither.
Inhale the breeze awhile from yonder hills,
Thy sleep will be the sweeter. How profound
The calm is now become. All Nature watches,
Enamoured of our loneliness, to guard it.
With what a fragrance
The rose and orange flower embalm the air!
Elysium! and behold, the moon hath tarried

To shed her first mild lustre o'er this hour.
Living for such a moment, is it not
To live for all that mortals may dare hope for?

HERNANI.

You droop.

ZANTHE.

Methinks I do, and feel as if
Soaring too far above the common lot
I needs must fall; this calm seems now too deep,
And sad. Could I but hear a nightingale
Warbling in mystery, one knows not where,
A lover's lute, or —

[*The distant sound of a horn is heard, R. U. E.*]

HERNANI (*startled with terror*).

What appalling sound
Is that?

ZANTHE.

Some spirit hears, — our guardian angel.

HERNANI (*with inward bitterness*).

Yes, 't is our guardian angel. [*Horn sounds again*]. Ah!
again.

ZANTHE.

'T is thine own signal!

HERNANI.

Do you recognise it?

ZANTHE.

I do.

HERNANI (*aside*).

And so do I. [*Horn repeated*].

ZANTHE.

Again! Who is it?

HERNANI (*wildly*).

A tiger howling for his prey.

ZANTHE.

My lord !

HERNANI (*with fearful emotion*).

Call me Hernani ! Still Hernani ! now
That name alone is mine for ever !

ZANTHE.

You are distracted. On my knees I charge you
Tell me the secret of thy thoughts.

HERNANI.

I have sworn —

ZANTHE (*watching him anxiously*).

Sworn what ?

HERNANI (*raising his hand to his forehead, and recovering himself*).

Nay, nothing. I know not what I say.

ZANTHE.

You said —

HERNANI.

No matter what. My brain is troubled.
I am not well ; but let it not alarm thee.

ZANTHE.

Let me seek something that may relieve thee.

[*Horn repeated.*]

HERNANI.

Ere this it should be done — oh !

ZANTHE.

You are suffering keenly.

HERNANI.

Aye, of an ancient wound I thought had healed;
But 't is envenomed newly. [*Aside.*] She must leave us
Listen; there is a coffer I have always
With me.

ZANTHE.

There is? Contains it that will soothe thee?

HERNANI.

I recollect it does. Desire thy page
To seek and bring it hither.

ZANTHE.

'T is an office
For me alone.

HERNANI.

And this is then the lot
The emperor in his magnanimity,
My Donna Zanthé in her matchless love,
Prepared for me. Amid the festal, lo!
The finger on the wall, and in the bower
Of bliss I lead an angel to, a demon
Waits me! A desperate life I pledged to him;
How different is the coin in which I pay
The fatal debt! Yet all is still again.
Perhaps (Heaven grant it!) 't was the sound deceived me.
[*The Mask in the black domino appears at the end of the terrace, R. HERNANI shrinks at the sight, and stands petrified.*]

DON LEO.

"Whate'er befall me, at whatever time,
Or place thou would'st demand my life, 't is thine,

And claim it. Only sound this horn,
I sha'n't mistake it, and thy will be done."
This compact by the noble dead was witnessed,
Yet performed it is not.

HERNANI.

'T is he.

DON LEO.

I claim my right.

HERNANI.

Take it. I am prepared.

DON LEO.

I am no executioner. Proud honour
Pays its own debts, nor waits disgraceful seizure.

HERNANI.

Show me the means.

DON LEO.

They are not wanting. I
Come both to claim and share thy sacrifice,
And bring a potion which will deal quickly with us,
Or, if thou wilt, a dagger; make thy choice,
And the alternative be mine.

HERNANI.

The poison.

DON LEO.

Thou'rt prompt, and bravely wilt give up the soul
Of a Castilian nobleman. 'T is here. [*Gives it.*]
Thy hand. Now, mercy for us both! Drink thou,
And I will strike. Dost shrink?

HERNANI.

I do.

Thy claim is sacred, I disown it not;

Yet, if thou 'rt human, art not more than fiend,
Only till to-morrow
Remit thy claim. Strike not this icy horror
To the warm bosom of an innocent bride,
But grant one day for lenity.

DON LEO.

Ha! ha! ha!
To-morrow! Am I for thy mirth? Think'st thou
The raging fire that feeds upon my heart
Will leave its pulses beating till to-morrow?
Shame on thy trifling! Fate is urgent with me,
And we must die together.

HERNANI.

Demon! — hence!

DON LEO (*tauntingly*).

Why so? 'T was but an oath,
Pledged by the honour of thy ancestors, —
Thy father's and thine own.

HERNANI.

Yet for thy name man, the world thou livest in —

DON LEO.

I deal with it as it has dealt with me.
Art thou a slave, a liar, and a coward,
Or the legitimate Duke of Arragon?

HERNANI.

Art thou —

DON LEO.

I am a rock the whirlwind stirs not.
Confront thine infamy or die!

Don Leo, Hernani, and Zantbe

Etched by Léon Boisson — From Painting by A. Michelena



1840. 101.

1840. 101.

HERNANI.

No more.

This do I quaff to thine eternal torment.

[*Goes to drink, when DONNA ZANTHE enters L., suddenly. She speaks as she enters, then observes him with surprise.*

ZANTHE.

I found it not. What drug is that? You shudder.
My voice affrights thee. Here are some dark doings
Thou would'st conceal from me. Still silent.

[*The Mask strikes her attention, and discovers himself.*

Ah!

Horrible vision! wherefore are ye met
Thus secretly? He brings thee poison! Speak!

HERNANI.

I cannot.

ZANTHE.

Cannot? Am I not thy wife that thus
Thou deal'st with me in dreadful mystery?
I must be told the truth.

HERNANI.

And art thou doomed
From me to hear it? I sold
My life to him, when it was cheaply bartered
For present safety, and reserv'd in trust
To save thee from dishonour. 'T was my bond.

ZANTHE.

An impious bond!

DON LEO.

An oath,—

A soldier's, and a noble Spaniard's oath.

ZANTHE.

A devilish oath.

HERNANI.

An oath inviolable.

ZANTHE.

A vain, a guilty, and a damning oath !
Tremble, both.

Idolaters ! an earthly god you worship
In mockery of the Great Eternal [*Draws a dagger.*] Lo !
[*To DON LEO.*]

My fears have armed me, and thou know'st me not.
Am I not of thy race ? Thy wrathful blood
On thee I'll prove. My father had assail'd
My husband's life at peril of his own,
As thou dost. No relenting word ? Forgive me !
[*Throws away the dagger, and falls at his feet.*]
Alas ! Alas ! Have pity on us both ;
I am a fond weak woman, and my heart
Still yearns to love thee as it ever loved.
I am subdued, and at thy feet implore thee,
Spare him. Have pity on us both !

HERNANI.

Canst thou
Thus humble thee in vain ? The fiend is smiling.

ZANTHE.

A smile of mercy, of compassion. Look !
[*Alluding to HERNANI.*]
Behold him in his bravery ! And canst thou
Kill him for loving me ? 'T is past recall.
I'm sworn to him.

DON LEO.

And he to me.

ZANTHE.

Let him —

Let him do flintiest penance, but not die.

HERNANI.

Delude thee not,

Dishonoured must I live, or here must die

DON LEO.

The choice perplexes thee.

HERNANI.

Thou liest !

[Raises the poison, ZANTHE still opposing.]

ZANTHE.

Hold !

Oh, hear, yet hear me both, ye cruel men !

I am a wife, and to a dying husband

Would ease a bursting heart.

DON LEO.

Be brief. We wait.

ZANTHE (*bewildered, hanging on him*).

A moment.

Let me say all, and then I shall be strong.

[Leaning on HERNANI, she convulsively grasps the poison.]

I have it ! Slay him now some other way.

DON LEO.

Woman, farewell ! The power is left me still

To trumpet forth thy shame on earth, and then

To tell this tale among thine ancestors.

HERNANI.

Yet stay ! [*To ZANTHE.*] Be firm and hear me. My proud
 Zanthe,
 Lofty of soul as beautiful of form !
 Shall I then live to bear about the brand
 Of perjury and dastard fear, disgrace
 Nobility, endure the taunting finger
 That marks me out a recreant to my name,
 Outcast of honour, and the stain of knighthood,
 Till even thyself despise me ? No, I charge thee,
 By the pure passion of our hearts, restore
 The poison !

ZANTHE.

These are solemn words. Awhile
 I will consider them.
 [*Retires a little, suddenly drinks of the phial, and then
 presents it to him.*]
 Drink now.

HERNANI.

What hast thou done ?

DON LEO (*horror-stricken*).

Was it for her ?

HERNANI.

Murderer, dost shrink at last ?
 It is too late.

ZANTHE.

Be satisfied ; thy share
 Is left thee. Hadst thou done as much
 For me, thou selfish lord ? But I'm content.
 Now sacrifice thee to thy phantom god.

HERNANI (*gazing in anguish*).

A death so fearful —

ZANTHE.

No, 't is nothing fearful.
We 'll sleep together still, soundly and sweetly
As on our bed of down.

HERNANI (*to DON LEO*).

Still I forget thee.

[*Drinks and throws away the phial.*]

Now revel in thy work.

ZANTHE (*clinging to him*).

Didst drink it? Would thou hadst not.
'T will gender in thy heart a nest of vipers.
They are here with tongues of fire. And now 't is ice, —
A drowsy chill. Dost thou not suffer?

HERNANI.

Nothing.

ZANTHE.

Then lay me down to rest, and come thou too,
[*She sinks gently down in his embrace.*]
Thy bride looks somewhat pale, I fear; but thou
Still lovest her; in thy arms she still will rest,
And 't will content her.

HERNANI.

These pangs! Yet hers are soothed.

ZANTHE.

Where art thou?
'T is dark, but soon we shall ascend together
To realms of light.

HERNANI (*becoming faint*).

Dark — dark, indeed, hath been
My doom ; yet all I prayed for at the worst
Was thus to die, my lips upon this hand.

DON LEO.

Die, die, that I may hear no more ! They 're happy !

ZANTHE.

My love !

HERNANI.

I 'm dizzy — and thy sufferings !

ZANTHE.

Gone, —
Quite gone.

HERNANI.

Then all is well — 't is mercy — oh !

[*Falls and expires.*]

ZANTHE.

Before me ?

DON LEO.

Dead !

ZANTHE.

No, no,
He sleeps. Thou, angry Duke, awake him not.
He is my husband — this our bridal bed.
Hush — trouble not our dreams — near, near.

[*Turns his face, and draws it towards her.*]

And now —

Good night. [*Dies.*]

DON LEO.

Dead ! dead ! and smiling still.
Within there ! ho ! A murderer in the palace !
The rack ! The rack !

*Enter DON HENRIQUEZ and DON MATTHIAS, followed by
the other guests, S. R. E.*

DON LEO.

Flames !

Flames ! and the rack ! Torture my limbs — and ease

My soul. It is too late.

[Gasps and expires in their arms.]

Tableau — solemn music — and

CURTAIN.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE KING.
THE MASK.
COUNT JEAN DE CRÉQUI.
CARDINAL MAZARIN.
GUILLOT-GORJU.
TAGUS.
COUNT DE BUSSY.
DUKE DE CHAULNE.
COUNT DE BRÉZÉ.
VISCOUNT D'EMBRUN.
BENOIT DE TRÉVOUX, *Lieutenant of Police*.
M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN.
CHANDENIER.
A BOURGEOIS.
A CAPTAIN OF A DISTRICT.
A JAILER.
THE QUEEN-MOTHER.
AIIX DE PONTIEU.
DAME CLAUDE.

Gentlemen, Peasants, Soldiers, Exempts, etc.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A little deserted square near the gate of the hotel Bussy, into which run two or three streets. In the back scene the three steeples of St. Germain-des-Prés appear above some houses. On the rising of the curtain two men are in front of the scene, one of whom, GUILLOT-GORJU, has nearly finished dressing the other in clothes similar to his own; namely, the fantastic and ragged costume of the mountebanks of Callot. The other has already put on yellow stockings, shoes with extravagant puffs, breeches of old black silk, and jerkin. The costumes of the two men are exactly alike, so that one of them might be easily taken for the other. The garments abandoned by the man who is disguising himself lie on the ground. They are dark in colour, but rich in appearance.*

A few steps farther off, another man — also clad like a “merry andrew,” — has nearly finished constructing, with poles fixed in the chinks of the pavement, tatters of damask silk and other old cloths, a booth, such as charlatans use, with a stage on the outside; and within, a table, juggling-cups, a pack of cards, a big drum, two dilapidated straw chairs, and a valise filled with drugs and phials.

At the side is a little hand-cart.

During the first three scenes townspeople are passing up and down at the back of the theatre.

SCENE I.

GUILLOT-GORJU, THE MAN, TAGUS, *busy at the booth.*

GUILLOT.

The job is done. Now you're another man.

[He examines the man he is disguising with complacency.]
Why, you are really like me! Well, that's strange!

THE MAN.

You think I'll do? When will the lady come?

GUILLOT.

Towards dusk.

THE MAN.

She's young?

GUILLOT.

Oh, yes! You may believe
That you're in luck. [*Mysteriously.*]

When the coast's clear at eight,
Or thereabout, you'll hear in yon dark corner,
[*He points to the back of the square.*
Three claps, like this. [*He claps his hands three times.*

Then you must say aloud:
"God alone's master! Compiègne and Pierrefonds!"
She will appear.

THE MAN.

Be sure to keep my secret!

GUILLOT (*with a gesture of protest*).

Oh, comrade! Trust in me!

THE MAN.

You cannot tell
Her name?

GUILLOT.

I know it not. The night I saw her,
[*He points out a hovel on the right.*
Before that hut, there was no light.

THE MAN.

The scheme
Is bold, indeed!

GUILLOT.

The lady, of high rank!

THE MAN.

What interest drives her on this perilous course ?

GUILLOT.

Why, she is young ! I' faith ! youth is the time
When one will spend wherever God points out
The generous sentiments that fill the soul.
We're ready then for every sacrifice ;
And if on reason we cannot lay hold,
Its semblance satisfies us. The first breeze
That passes by us bears away our veil.
Now, do not frighten her by raising hers.

THE MAN.

And does she know the prisoner's name ?

GUILLOT.

Oh, no !

That terrible name is hidden from mankind, —
Except the Queen and my lord cardinal.

THE MAN.

How is it she seeks your aid in this affair ?

GUILLOT.

You see we're rather famed for breaking loose !
There is no wall too high to stop our passage,
And bolts and bars are toys with which we play !
From the Bastille I have dragged out Schomberg,
From Vincennes, the great Admiral of Castile,
Gif from the Temple, and Lescur I freed
From the old keep of Amiens ; we find
People who serve us everywhere. Though thieves
And vagabonds, we even meet with friends
Among the Jesuits.

THE MAN.

If this affair
Have the results I hope, I will employ you.
Then you are certain that, without mistrust,
This lady, thinking that she speaks to you,
Will tell me all her plans.

GUILLOT.

So I believe.

THE MAN (*taking a purse from the clothes lying on the ground*).

Here are your hundred louis.

GUILLOT.

Captain, thanks.

THE MAN.

Ah! by the way, the letter that you stole
From the Queen's messenger.

[GUILLOT *hands him a letter which he examines and then puts by carefully.*]

Pray, tell me how

You managed that.

GUILLOT.

It's easy to explain.

It happened yesterday that on the road
That leads to Spain Tagus and I were strolling.
And as we walked along in pleasant converse
There galloped by a gentleman, who stopped
At the Croix de Berry. Tagus is no fool,
And said to me, "That fellow's in a heat
And sure to drain a glass." And so it was;
He squatted at a table near the church.
Then Tagus made a hole in his valise,

And from it jumped the letter and some ducats.
Had we been seen, the thing was rather awkward,
But unsuspecting rode our man away.

THE MAN (*aside*).

On what mere chance the fate of empires rests!
[*Aloud.*] Do you believe the townsmen who may loiter
Around the square will take me for you?

GUILLOT (*presenting him an overcoat of old black velvet
and a big hood of yellow silk*).

Yes;

Put on my Algerine cloak and silken hood.
Your wig is black like mine, so is your hair;
In figure and in bearing we are brothers;
Each has a tuneful voice. Speak high, shout loud.
You're sure to take them in.

THE MAN (*putting on the overcoat and hood*).

But then your servant?

GUILLOT.

Oh, Tagus — 'T is his instinct to see all
And to say nought. He will be blindly led.
God's cross! — you courtiers know it well — a man
Can be trained like a dog.

THE MAN.

Retz never said
A truer thing himself. — O God who rulest!
Omnipotent God! what good to live in dens,
If among robbers man grows as depraved
As in a court! [*To GUILLOT.*] Do not betray me, and
Let me not see your face again.

GUILLOT (*with theatrical emphasis*).

This doublet

Never has hid a traitor's skin.

THE MAN (*smiling*).

But then

Your doublet scarcely hides your skin at all.

GUILLOT.

Fear not ! fear not !

[*He picks up an old bulged and broken hat, adorned with a faded yellow feather, and says majestically.*

Behold your hat, my lord !

[*Calling Tagus, who has been busy at the booth all this time.*
Tagus, behold your master ! [TAGUS bows.]

Be obedient,

Be docile, for he is my second self.

[*He dismisses TAGUS with a gesture and turns to* THE MAN.
For you — rest tranquil ! I will not conceal
The fact that I am going far from hence ;
For artists such as we, Paris has grown
An insalubrious spot.

THE MAN.

For shame ! Gorju,

On such a pleasant road do you retreat ?

GUILLOT.

The Chatelet's officers have of late become
A little too absurd. But, by the way,
Do you know anything of palmistry ?

THE MAN.

A little. 'T is a graceful art.

GUILLOT.

In truth

The oldest, noblest of all arts, whereby

The hand discovers what the heart conceals.
And so it happens dames of high estate
Come often to consult me on the future.

THE MAN (*astonished*).

This happens often ?

GUILLOT.

Yes.

THE MAN.

And here ?

GUILLOT.

Even here.

THE MAN.

In open air ?

GUILLOT.

They lower their veils, and then
We draw the hangings.

[*He points to a frightful old rag hanging from the poles.*

Next, we — improvise.

THE MAN.

Courage! I'll risk it!

GUILLOT (*showing the valise full of phials*).

There are the elixirs.

[*He opens a drawer in the table.*

And if you need to write, both ink and paper.

[*He gathers the clothes on the ground and makes a bundle of them, first taking from them a large brown cloak in which he muffles himself, and the felt hat of THE MAN, new, and adorned with plumes, which he places on his head.*

The hour draws nigh when the good citizens
Will pass this way. I'm off. Ah, I forgot!
In duty, I must put you on your guard.

The man who bears my name runs, good my lord,
Some risk of being hanged.

THE MAN.

You think so, really?
He who bears mine, good friend, may lose his head.

GUILLOT.

God save you then!

THE MAN.

He'll have no easy task,
As you well see. Good-bye.

[GUILLOT-GORJU *departs*. Left alone, THE MAN *sits on a stone post lying on the ground, draws from his pocket the letter GUILLOT-GORJU gave him, and appears to read it with deep attention, which soon changes to deep meditation; TAGUS is arranging the phials and mending the old tapestry of the booth.*

SCENE II.

THE MAN (*alone, his eyes fixed on the letter*).

In Gascony

A fleet — an army raised in Piedmont too —

At Madrid agents — [*Raising his head.*] and the Queen
has also

Her own particular schemes. [*Musing.*] But this young
girl, —

A star that leaves its sphere, — how does she come

To mix in such dark plots? This Mazarin

Is only fit to taint whate'er he touches!

There's nothing in the fellow! Oh, those kings!

How well they chose their servants! If there be

A black knave in some hole, who yearns to wear

A red soutane, a rogue who licks the hand
 He'll later bite, a sham priest and sham noble,
 Of bastard soul, who filters through his sieve,
 Alike both King and people, and whose mind
 Is but a grewsome solvent loosening all, —
 'Tis such as he the Bourbons will select,
 As once the Valois did, by righteous laws
 To raise the people up and give new life
 And energy to all, both throne and realm.
 In his polluted hands they place the State,
 From royal palace to the peasant's hut,
 From high to low, from granary to cellar,
 And of a poisoner they make a cook!

[Fixing his eyes musingly on the letter.]

For certain — if the plot succeeds — we might
 The Comté win from Spain — and without war.

[He falls again into a fit of reverie and resumes the reading of the letter.]

The DUKE DE CHAULNE and COUNT DE BUSSY enter from the back of the theatre, speaking low and with a kind of mystery, without seeing THE MAN or being seen by him.

SCENE III.

The DUKE DE CHAULNE, the COUNT DE BUSSY, both in city costume. THE MAN in a corner; TAGUS always in the booth.

DE BUSSY.

Oh, yes! The story's passing strange, in truth;
 It was two years before the King was born.

DE CHAULNE.

In thirty-six?

DE BUSSY.

You're right. There's near Compiègne
An ancient castle, built, it really seems,
With a design to gull some strict duenna
Or jealous husband for a lover's gain,
Such skill the worthy architect has shown,
In hidden galleries and secret doors,
As if to further a discreet intrigue!

DE CHAULNE.

My dear, I know it! It's Plessis-les-Rois, —
A ruined manor hidden in the woods,
And under it a long and secret passage,
Dug, it is rumoured, while the late King reigned,
Which with the Castle of Compiègne connects.
Filled in again, it was again remade
By Mazarin, who with the Queen alone
Has access to the secret path. It's said
That in its depths those doubtful nuptial rites
Which bind her to that paltry man took place,
Thanks to a dispensation from the Pope.
There they can talk together at their ease,
And there they sometimes go to quarrel.

DE BUSSY.

True.

There chanced to be at that time at Compiègne
A nobleman, whose name I fear's extinct, —
Jean de Créqui.

DE CHAULNE.

By heavens! a handsome lad!

DE BUSSY.

And, on the other hand, Plessis-les-Rois
Had for sole garrison a tender belle

Who lived secluded from the world. Jean knew
All the approaches to the manor, and,
Love favouring his crafty stratagems, —
Jean was no fool, — he stormed the citadel,
And found himself in Beauty's chamber. Now,
Later he learned — how, I scarcely know —
That the fair lady was his brother's wife.
(I give the facts, arrange them as you will.)
The worst, or best, of this was that a girl
Was born after nine months had elapsed, —
A girl without reproach, a legal girl,
As none could be more married than her mother.
But then Count Jean! — It's ticklish, as you see.

DE CHAULNE.

The girl is named?

DE BUSSY.

Alix de Ponthieu.

At present she's an orphan, I believe.

DE CHAULNE.

Where does she live?

DE BUSSY.

Deuce take me if I know!

She lives alone, — a rare thing at seventeen.

DE CHAULNE.

And handsome?

DE BUSSY.

As the day. Jean de Créqui
To this young girl gave henceforth all his love.
As to himself, — the story's of long date, —
For ten years he has vanished from the stage,
Proscribed for plotting.

DE CHAULNE.

Ah! Yes, I remember, —
By Mazarin. The Luynes have his lands.

DE BUSSY.

If he return, the scaffold has his head.

[*The two gentlemen continue talking and leave the square. For some moments TAGUS has been near THE MAN, without succeeding in attracting his attention; at last he determines to address him.*

SCENE IV.

THE MAN, TAGUS, *afterward townspeople, men and women.*

TAGUS.

Say, master?

THE MAN.

Eh?

TAGUS.

Ought we not to get ready?

THE MAN.

Do so.

TAGUS.

You know the townsfolk are about
To leave the market-place of Saint Germain —
Please give me then a hand.

[*THE MAN helps him in hoisting the big drum on the stage.*

THE MAN.

Now beat the drum.

[TAGUS *begins beating the drum. A few persons appear here and there at the back of the square. After beating it some time with all his might he stops out of breath.*

THE MAN (*musings, leaning his elbow on the stage*).
A woman mixed with this! — Past comprehension!
[*Turning to TAGUS.*] Say, would you be the man, some day or other,
To do an honest action?

TAGUS.

We 'd be fools!
For such as we an honest action 's dangerous,
And shines with light that flings back perilous gleams.
I do not see besides great profit from it.
Still, do it! Just give me enough to eat
And no one's more content than I.

THE MAN.

Come, Tagus,
What do you think I am?

TAGUS.

A thief. And more —
To me it matters little!

THE MAN.

Don't you know
That, living in this fashion, some fine day
We shall be, Tagus, strung up by the neck?
We're bandits, brother!

TAGUS (*seizing the big drum*).

Oh, shake off such thoughts!
[*He beats the drum violently. An audience is formed around the booth, of men, women, children, some old townspeople, and a large number of beggars.*

TAGUS (*on the stage, and shouting with all his strength*).
 Hello ! all you that want a pleasant life
 In this viscounty of our city Paris,
 Rustics and townsfolk, come ! come, page and lord !
 Who wants good health ? Who seeks for happiness ?
 We sell them ! You all know that pride, the vices,
 Love and the lawyers, fevers, nurses, all
 Suggestions lewd and crazy visions hinder
 The ends ordained beforehand by the stars.
 Come hither ! Through us, all men reach good luck !
 A good astrologer's the rarest thing !
 Manilas is obscure, and Firmique rash ;
 The raving of L'Arabie's simply shocking ;
 Junctin will tell too much, and Spina nothing ;
 Cardan was out about the English King ;
 Argolus is too Greek, Pontan too Roman ;
 Leonice and Pezel are too afraid
 To leave the beaten track.

[*With immense increase of emphasis*
 Now to find out

All Nature's mysteries from top to bottom ;
 To draw a horoscope and tell your fortune ;
 Show every man his future, like Apollo,
 By means o' the air, dead bodies, land and water ;
 To sway Ormusd and baffle Ariman,
 Or make a baron's wife a beggar love,
 Or to recite the famous Scarron's verse,
 Or to predict to each assured success ;
 For hyleg, antist, or triplicity ;
 For changing copper into gold before
 Your very eyes ! for selling marvellous philters
 At a mere nothing, — plumbagine, storax
 Sublimate, mithridate ; for guessing sure
 A day, a date, an epoch, there is none, —
 No, gentlemen, there is not one who matches
 The great Guillot-Gorju, my master. Gaze !

Behold him! Jean Tritème is only fit
To kiss his slippers. As for Ptolemy
He's but a coxcomb and Calchas a boor!

[*Lively sensation among the audience. TAGUS gets down
from the tribune out of breath, and says to THE MAN,
in an undertone.*

It's your turn, master, while I go and test
The pockets of these ninnyhammers.

THE MAN.

Go.

[*He mounts the stage in his turn. While he is haranguing,
TAGUS moves among the throng and adroitly explores
their breeches, profiting by the attention they direct to
the booth.*

THE MAN (*with the tone and impressive emphasis of
charlatans*).

My rustic friends, I've traversed lands and waves.
There is not in an atlas, chart, or map,
A single country I have not surveyed,
Sought, found, explored, inspected, verified!

[TAGUS, *having finished his first round, ascends the tribune,
and under cover of his hood shows THE MAN his hand
full of small coins.*

TAGUS (*in a low tone*).

They've nought but sous and liards,¹ master!

[*Turning to the people with indignation.*] Scum!

[*He descends and renews his search.*

THE MAN (*continuing*).

I've seen the King of Algiers play a game
Of dice and laugh. He sat in his elbow-chair.

¹ An old French coin worth about half a cent.

Two lovely broidered birds, whose plumage spreads
 Along the back, adorn that elbow-chair.
 One drinks, the other eats.

TAGUS (*emptying two pockets with his two hands at the same time*).

[*Aside.*] Nothing but sous !

THE MAN (*taking a phial and showing it to the spectators*).
 The elixirs of love ! [*To a ragpicker.*]
 Pray, madame, have I not
 Observed you at Vienna when the court
 Was holding a high festival ?

TAGUS.

 We were
 The darlings of Vienna ! We were there !

THE MAN.

The Infanta, if my memory's correct,
 Was, on my soul, adorable as Hebe.
 She wore a petticoat of flaming gingham.
 She came, she went, she laughed, and danced around,
 And fuddled herself in such delightful style ! —
 With wine not taken from the aqueducts.
 Oh, 't was Olympus ! Kings, archdukes, and dukes ! —
 [*He displays his phials before the eyes of the crowd.*]
 Phials for toothache, fever, or a swoon.

TAGUS (*in falsetto*).

Who asks a flask ? Who wants a horoscope ?

THE MAN.

I come from Portugal ! They have a king,
 Quite young, — sixteen, — and, faith, a merry lad !

When Obregon, the alcalde now disgraced,
 Spake thus : " How can I liberate your Grace
 From Count de Valverde ? " Thus the prince replied -
 " Beat him to death ! " with all that sprightliness
 So charming at his age. [*With melancholy.*] O youth !
 O springtime !
 O azure skies of heaven ! [*To the crowd.*] Who wants the
 oils
 Of beauty ? [*Leaning forward to the purchasers.*] Lily ?
 jasmine ? almond ? rose ?

TAGUS (*with emphasis*).

Speak !

[*While the spectators press around the stage, buying, choosing, and paying, TAGUS takes a townsman aside and draws him in front of the theatre by one of the big buttons he has on his dress.*]

TAGUS (*confidentially to the Townsman*).

Clown, a great magician is my master !

So great, that —

[*He raises his finger in the air as if to point out an object in the clouds.*]

Do you see yon bird ?

TOWNSMAN (*raising his head*).

I don't.

TAGUS.

Well, if it pleases him, my master can,
 According to the spheres, right or oblique
 Or parallel direct its wings !

[*He takes a purse out of one of the pockets of the Townsman.*]

TOWNSMAN.

There 's none !

TAGUS.

Look yonder! In the air!

*[He takes a watch from the other pocket.]*TOWNSMAN (*after looking*).

There's none.

TAGUS.

Your eyes

Are very bad, my friend.

*[Confusion in the audience. The Police appear, Archers, Gendarmes, Excempts, Watchmen, Guards of the Provost, led by a district Police Officer. The crowd scatters.]*TAGUS *seems anxious*.OFFICER (*in a loud voice*).

Which of the rogues

That swindle simple people in that booth

Is Guillot-Gorju?

THE MAN.

I.

OFFICER.

You are my prisoner,

Knave!

THE MAN (*impassive*).

Ah! You might be somewhat more polite.

OFFICER (*to TAGUS*).

You, too, come on!

[Three Archers surround and drag off TAGUS, who struggles]

THE MAN.

My servant also! Why?

OFFICER.

Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,

Will question you himself, and he may tell you.

He follows us. Look there!

[TRÉVOUX *appears, clad in black, surrounded by his sergeants.*

THE MAN (*always on the stage, to the bystanders*).

Rustics, retire !

Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,
Comes hither to consult me, and to proffer
His custom. Grave affairs of State will be
Discussed between us.

[*He descends from the stage and bows to the Lieutenant of Police, then turning to the Archers.*

Soldiers, usher in

The lieutenant of police and close the doors.

[*He draws the old rags that serve for a curtain.* BENOIT
TRÉVOUX *enters the booth. The soldiers disperse the crowd.*

SCENE V.

THE MAN, MAITRE BENOIT TRÉVOUX. *Two or three Sergeants within the booth ; outside, Police stationed at the approaches to the square.*

THE MAN (*regarding the Lieutenant of Police contemptuously*).

Sir, are you mad ?

TRÉVOUX (*astounded*).

Yours is a courteous question !

THE MAN.

Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,
[*Pointing to the Archers.*] Kindly dismiss these slaves,
these myrmidons.

TRÉVOUX.

Oh, thanks, they are no trouble where they are !

THE MAN (*politely*).

Excuse me. They are irksome and ill-favoured.
Whoever risks a perilous venture must
Take all that follows, be it good or bad.
But pray, what can you gain by capturing me ?

TRÉVOUX.

The King will thank me.

THE MAN.

Not you, my dear lord.
The Cardinal's certain to have all the honour.

TRÉVOUX (*aside, smiling*).

The rascal's right !

THE MAN.

You're loathed by Mazarin.
You're working for his interest, not your own !

TRÉVOUX.

Perhaps. However, as I do my duty,
I am content. I must be vigilant
To see that public order's not disturbed ;
To help the honest, watch at every door,
Guard every purse from bandits of your kind,
Keep free the highways and extirpate thieves,
Brigands, and beggars !

THE MAN.

But are not your aims
Somewhat extravagant ?

TRÉVOUX.

To prison, rogue!

THE MAN.

You are a vandal!

TRÉVOUX.

On to the Châtelet

THE MAN.

Oh, very well! I will avenge myself
By stirring up a frightful scandal! Think,
Before you drive me to extremes, that I,
Guillot-Gorju, see and know everything!
For fifteen years without reproach or fear
I've lived, and in your secrets had my eyes —

TRÉVOUX.

And in our pockets also had your hands!
But, knave, you shall be judged!

THE MAN.

Does that delight you?
'Tis well! Before the Châtelet's full court
I'll cry, among a thousand epigrams,
All that your wives are doing night and day!

TRÉVOUX.

Convicted and condemned you shall be too!

THE MAN.

Hold! till I tell you what you are —

TRÉVOUX.

Gorju!

THE MAN.

With proof in hand! [*Lowering his voice.*]
 Supposing some one wished
 To give you trouble: the three rubies filched
 From the Queen's treasury might supply the means.

TRÉVOUX.

The robbers taken by us have been hanged.

THE MAN (*in the ear of TRÉVOUX*).

The rubies taken by you have not been
 Restored.

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

The devil! [*Aloud.*] But give proof —

THE MAN.

Of what?

TRÉVOUX.

Of what you fancy.

THE MAN (*with a majestic smile*).

Oh! I never dwell
 Upon things of the sort; in me 't would show
 The very worst of taste. Such pedantry
 I leave the King's attorney.

TRÉVOUX (*to the Sergeants*).

Move aside. [*To THE MAN.*]
 We can talk more at ease. How know you this?

THE MAN.

Faith —

TRÉVOUX (*with interest*).

Take a chair.

THE MAN (*sitting down*)

I know it, as I know —

Pray, hold a moment — of a certain plot —

[TRÉVOUX *dismisses by a gesture the Sergeants, who leave the booth.*

TRÉVOUX (*disturbed*).

A plot? Friend you astound me!

THE MAN (*unmoved*).

And to which

You are a party.

TRÉVOUX (*with increased alarm*).

I? Oh, no!

THE MAN.

There is

A weighty mystery connected with it.

A prisoner —

TRÉVOUX (*quickly*).

Be silent!

THE MAN.

As you like;

I'm willing to be silent.

TRÉVOUX.

No, speak on!

THE MAN.

One day you brought this prisoner near Compiègne,
Where then the court resided, — with what aim?

TRÉVOUX.

Pure chance!

THE MAN.

The circumstances all combine
To prove that in the shade you were devising
A strange encounter. For, though Mazarin
May be the one at whom the plot is aimed,
When it explodes it may perhaps strike higher.

TRÉVOUX.

Be still! How know you this? [*Aside.*] An awful man!

THE MAN.

What you all say, in bed, at church, or table,
Is known to me.

[*He draws from his pocket the letter which he received from*
GUILLOT-GORJU.

Observe this letter closely,
And tell me if you recognize the hand.

TRÉVOUX (*casting his eyes on the letter and growing pale*).
I do not.

THE MAN.

Yes, you do.

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

It is the Queen's!

THE MAN (*smiling*).

Come, come! Be not afraid,—whom should you dread? —
And say like me aloud: “It is the Queen's!”
Observe the address.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

“To the King of Spain,
My brother.” [*Aside.*] Surely, this man is the fiend!

THE MAN.

Pray read.

*[He presents the letter to TRÉVOUX.]*TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

“I have received a sardonix
On which is graved a monk’s head, from the Pope,
And set it in a ring I ever wear.”

THE MAN.

Lower.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

“I reckon strongly on your help.
To render sure the issue of our plans
We only need a fleet in Gascony,
And army in Savoy.”

THE MAN.

Speak lower still.

TRÉVOUX (*reading in a voice that becomes more and more agitated*).

“No one speaks to me of the prisoner here,
But Mazarin, who, seized with rage, declares
That sooner than see reappear that child
He would, although a priest, infirm and old,
Kill him with his own hands.”

THE MAN.

Pray, not so loud.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

“Things do not go as I should wish ; but still
I have with me Thoiras and De Souvré.
Trévoux, the lieutenant of police, is ours.”

[Pale and interrupting himself.]

Where did you find this letter ?

THE MAN.

Pshaw! I have
A number like it. If perchance mishap
Shall overtake me, I forewarn you now,
A friend will make them public — so, beware!
Then do not vex me, and watch o'er my life!
[TRÉVOUX is for some moments a prey to a great internal
struggle. Then he turns abruptly and offers his hand.]

TRÉVOUX.

Let us be friends!

THE MAN (*taking the hand of TRÉVOUX and putting on
his hat*).

“I do beseech you, Cinna.”

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

No place is sacred from these bandits' eyes!
[*Aloud, with an amiable smile.*
Tell me my friend, are you in want of money?

THE MAN.

My doublet, as you see, has many mouths,
And all attest the fact. Beneath the cloak
Which hides me in its ample folds the devil
With mocking fingers drags my linen out
Through holes that were not furnished by the tailor.
[TRÉVOUX takes out his portfolio, writes some words with
a pencil, then tears out the page and hands it to the
man.]

TRÉVOUX.

There is a draft for eighteen hundred livres;
And in return, I ask you for such names
As might be useful, and the State secrets too
With which you are acquainted. Is that clear?

THE MAN (*taking the paper*).

Robber I may be; spy I'm not, my friend. [*He tears it.*
[TRÉVOUX *opens the hangings of the booth a little and dismisses the Sergeants who have stayed outside.*

TRÉVOUX (*to the Sergeants*).

Begone!

[*They obey in silence. The square becomes deserted.*

TRÉVOUX *approaches* THE MAN *affectionately.*

Now we may talk together; none
Can hear. [*Noise of steps in the neighbouring streets.*
Good heavens! some one!

THE MAN.

'T is too bad!

Just as you had become so fond of me!

[*From the little street on the left, opposite that through which the Police, etc., have disappeared, a woman comes forth, veiled, and clad in black. She looks behind her for an instant with anxiety, as if she feared to be observed, then enters the booth hastily.*

SCENE VI.

THE MAN, A VEILED WOMAN, TRÉVOUX. *At the moment the woman enters, TRÉVOUX wraps himself, in his cloak and sits down on the stool of TAGUS, in the farthest corner of the booth, with his back turned to the light, like one who does not wish to be recognized.*

VEILED WOMAN (*to THE MAN, without seeing TRÉVOUX*).

Friend, but two words. Look towards the way I came
And tell me am I followed.

THE MAN.

No.

VEILED WOMAN.

None comes

Behind me ?

THE MAN.

Madame, no —

VEILED WOMAN.

'T is well.

THE MAN (*aside*).

Who is 't ?

VEILED WOMAN.

You tell their horoscope to passers-by ?

THE MAN.

Yes, madame.

VEILED WOMAN.

Good ! I come to seek your aid.

Yours is an art in which the expert's eyes
 Reach loftier heights the lowlier his degree.
 Unconscious of our name he can point out
 The path we ought to take. 'T is what I need.
 I am a wretched woman. Listen !

[*Perceiving* TRÉVOUX.]

Who

Is yonder man ?

THE MAN.

My servant. Do not fear.

Is it your wish that I should read your hand ?

VEILED WOMAN (*presenting her hand to him*).

Examine it, and tell me what you see.

THE MAN (*aside, looks closely at a ring that glistens on her finger*).

Can it be true? The sardonyx on which
A monk's head is engraved! Why, 't is the Queen!

VEILED WOMAN (*a prey to violent agitation*).
O subtle man! search out with all your power.
Conceive a proud, imperious brow that bends
Beneath the vilest bondage!

THE MAN (*taking off his hat, then going to back and letting the hangings fall*).

Let me close
This window on your Majesty.

VEILED WOMAN (*turning round as if moved by a violent shock*).

From what
Can you tell who I am?

THE MAN (*unmoved*).
Your hand reveals
The name belonging to your Majesty.

VEILED WOMAN.
My hand betrays me! How?

THE MAN.
Its beauty tells!
It is a royal hand — of white and rose!
(*Aside*). And the sardonyx ring has aided much!

VEILED WOMAN.
Well, well! Go on!

THE MAN.
The causes of your grief
Are numbered by the hundred! For you are

The link that binds two royal houses, (Queen !
 Which, yielding to an unrelenting law,
 Drag you in opposite courses, both at once.
 To Spain your ancestors belong, to France
 Your children. Thus you suffer equal grief
 Whether your armies triumph or their foes.
 And woes more poignant still the Louvre holds
 For your undoing. You have cherished him
 Who preys upon you now ; and Mazarin,
 By you made great, is plotting at this moment
 Your ruin. Stone by stone, and noiselessly
 You fall each day. The mind of Mazarin
 Is the sole window through which looks the King,
 Who only sees whate'er that traitor wills,
 And in his mad love for the holy man,
 Desires to wed his niece, Olympe Mancini.
 They flout you, madame ; and your bitter plaints
 Serve but to raise the mocking laugh. Their feet
 Tread blithely on your ruins. Yet you would
 Avenge your wrongs, become again a queen,
 A mother, prompt to struggle, punished, smite !
 But everything for you takes spectral shape ;
 And in the darkness you have dreams that blanch
 Your cheeks with terror.

THE QUEEN (*looking at the man with a mixture of fear,
 curiosity, and deep surprise*).

Wretch ! from whom could you
 Have learned such things as these ?

THE MAN.

I see them. Know
 That, madame, all the secrets of the great
 Fall downwards, and the people's eyes pierce through
 The shadow of your soul.

THE QUEEN (*lifting her veil*).

Have pity then!

For I am racked, in truth, with torturing fears!
The King, my son, reaches his sixteenth year
Before a month, and then they will complete
This shameful union.

THE MAN (*in a low voice to THE QUEEN*).

And at that same hour,
Another, madame, will be sixteen years!

THE QUEEN (*growing pale*).

Whom speak you of? My friend, you rave.

THE MAN (*continuing in a voice gradually becoming lower
and more significant*).

'T is said

The awful likeness — to one whom you know —
[*He looks fixedly at THE QUEEN who turns aside in
anguish.*]

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

What is this man? O God! I meet with eyes
Would penetrate a tomb!

[*She turns round abruptly and looks him in the face.*]

Well, you who know

All that is happening, know you, fateful seer,
What said the Cardinal the other day?

THE MAN (*unmoved, but emphasizing his words*).

He said that he, though old — and sick — a priest —
Rather than see him come to life again,
And reappear, — although an old man shudders
At the mere thought of shedding youthful blood, —
With his own hand would slay —

THE QUEEN (*interrupting him in terror*).

One whom to name
You are forbid !

THE MAN (*continuing*).

A captive ! —

THE QUEEN (*frantic*).

Hush ! your words
Appal me ! If I saw not there your eyes
Aglow with life, I would believe I dreamed
And heard the voices of the hideous dead
Who sometimes speak ! What art thou then ?

THE MAN.

You see, —
A mountebank.

THE QUEEN.

But, say, have visions, then,
Appeared to thee ? Thou knowest what kings say —

THE MAN.

And what they do. My art is great.

THE QUEEN (*approaching him*).

I trust
Those fathomless eyes of thine. What shall I do ?

THE MAN.

Time is the slave of those who wait. Do you
Your spirit hold in readiness, and bide
Your time ; let things alone, and let God's hand,
Fraught with great issues, open o'er those brows,
Whether they be awake or in repose.
Your part you'll have therein, — and each, his own !

THE QUEEN.

O heavens! the hour is passing. I must leave!
Free me from this embarrassment; I would
Return unseen through the wood's entrance gate,
Through which, unseen, I have escaped. 'T is guarded
By Trévoux's people. How can I get through?

THE MAN.

Oh! I can aid you then. My servant, — this
Between ourselves, — can deftly counterfeit
The passes of Trévoux.

THE QUEEN.

Indeed!

THE MAN.

You know

His hand?

THE QUEEN.

I do.

[THE MAN, opening a drawer in the table and taking from it the pen and paper shown him by GUILLOT-GORJU, gives them to the Lieutenant of Police, who, during all this scene, continues in his first position, with his back turned, seated on a stool, and occasionally darting an oblique glance at THE QUEEN.

THE MAN (to MAITRE TRÉVOUX).

Quick! write: "Permit this lady
And her suite to pass."

[The Lieutenant of Police writes. THE MAN takes the paper and presents it to THE QUEEN, who examines the writing with astonishment.

THE QUEEN (*reading*).

Signed "Trévoux !" [*Aside.*] The man's

A sorcerer.

[*She draws the sardonyx ring and gives it to him.*

Stay ! in memory of me,

Accept this ring ; and should you wish to see me, —

Be it at Compiègne, Saint Germain, the Louvre,

Or elsewhere, — it will open every door.

[*THE MAN drops on one knee, takes the ring and puts it on his finger. THE QUEEN makes a sign to him to look round the square. It is becoming dark during the scene.*

No loiterer outside ?

[*THE MAN raises the hangings, then turns round.*

THE MAN.

'T is evening, madame.

The citizens have sought their homes.

THE QUEEN.

Adieu !

[*She goes out hastily. As soon as she does so, THE MAN goes straight to MAITRE TRÉVOUX, who rises.*

THE MAN (*to the Lieutenant of Police, in a grave and firm voice*).

Sir, you must see — and I have no desire

To sham the honest man — that one of us

Holds in his hands the other's head, and that

It is not you. I can destroy you. So

Begone ! — you and your spies ; and also mind

You ne'er return again. If I behold

One of your creatures here, you are denounced !

Away ! Yet, sir, I will consent to say

That, like yourself, I have my secret aims,

And that I am not he for whom you look.

Of your discretion mine will be the measure.
 Then silence — as to all ! And bear in mind
 Traitors in their own snares are ever caught ;
 And, therefore, no ill tricks. Agreed ?

TRÉVOUX (*as if stupefied*).

Agreed.

THE MAN.

Restore to me my servant.

TRÉVOUX (*casting a look of fear on THE MAN*).

This has been

A masterstroke of mine ! I thought to seize
 A worm, and lo ! I grasp a snake. What is
 This devil of a man I wonder ?

THE MAN (*with a gesture of dismissal*).

(Go.

[*The Lieutenant of Police departs. THE MAN gazes for some time after him, and then sits down pensively on the overturned post. At the back of the theatre the DUKE DE CHAULNE and COUNT DE BUSSY return from the same direction in which they left. They advance, talking, to the front of the scene without seeing THE MAN or being seen by him.*

THE MAN (*in a reverie*).

The night is falling.

DE CHAULNE (*to DE BUSSY*).

I am haunted by

The story of this De Créqui of yours ;
 And Alix de Ponthieu I cannot get
 Out of my head.

DE BUSSY (*pointing to the street on the left which runs into the square*).

Hold ! look ! It is Brézé,
And roaring like a tempest.

DE CHAULNE (*looking*).

What a rage
The man seems in !

DE BUSSY.

It was to-day he read
That libel on him, scattered far and wide,
In which 't is said he was a thief at Nîmes.

DE CHAULNE.

Yes, and 't is rumoured Mazarin inspired
The nameless scribbler.

[*Enter the COUNT DE BRÉZÉ and the VISCOUNT D'EMBRUN in the dress worn by courtiers in the city. DE BRÉZÉ appears violently irritated. He holds a pamphlet in his hand with which he gesticulates furiously. At the loud noise made on his entrance, THE MAN turns round, and examines the four gentlemen without being noticed by any of them.*

SCENE VII.

The same. COUNT DE BRÉZÉ, VISCOUNT D'EMBRUN.

DE BRÉZÉ (*to M. D'EMBRUN*).

What care I for all
Your pictures of the evils of the time ?
My sole, my poignant care is this affront, —

[Rubbing the pamphlet violently between his hands.]
 This stupid, monstrous, filthy, base affront
 Which I cannot avenge, yet must avenge!

D'EMBRUN.

Be calm. Why, zounds! here are Chaulne and Bussy!
 They also are displeased with Mazarin.

DE BRÉZÉ.

Displeased, indeed? I am enraged!

DE BUSSY.

And we
 Feel with you.

D'EMBRUN.

Men of gentle birth have been
 So curbed that Mazarin can strike them now
 With safety. Chaulne has lost his post.

DE BUSSY.

And I
 My regiment.

DE BRÉZÉ.

But, Embrun, such an outrage!
 The deadliest insult, a "You lie," a blow, —
 They're nought, I swear by heaven! when one can,
 In mode befitting foemen of our rank,
 Seize his man by the collar, and say: "Come!"
 If Uzés chafes Elbeuf, or Gontaut mocks
 La Tremouille, or Albret gives offence
 To Fontrailles, none of these is at a loss,
 When the word's uttered. They're stout-hearted fellows.
 What's said is said; and so in proud defiance
 Of all the laws and regulations made
 And Maître Jean, the headsman, they are off
 Upon the morrow, fury in their eyes

And on their purpling brows, with sword in hand
To meet upon the turf in deadly combat.
Then blow for blow, and blood for blood. 'T is right.
You blame, I praise them; these are lions, tigers.
Dreadful but grand, magnificent are they
That, bravely bitten, stontly bite again!
But, then, a cheat! a scamp! a hateful knave!
Who picks a pebble up to smash my window!
A rascal shaveling, an Italian monk,
A braggart whom a laundress of the wharves
Would drive before her, takes another's claw,
And then, to grandly prove his vaunted prowess,
With it he scratches me! A surpliced rogue!
A starveling thief, by Jove! who, while he mumbles
His paters in the dark, beslobbers me,
And has me outraged by the silly jabber,
Spread by a dirty scribbler, at three sons
The page! Ha! tonsured, mitred wretch, dost thou
Let slip thy bulldogs on me, and in fear
Conceal thyself! If, like a caitiff, I
Do not have him well cudged by six lackeys
On the Pont-Neuf before King Henry's statue,
Then call me coxcomb without heart or soul!

DE CHAULNE.

That is, upon my faith, a glorious thought.
I'm with you.

DE BUSSY.

And to cheer you on I'll be
Among the cits, tramps, beggars on the causeway!

DE CHAULNE.

I furnish the six lackeys.

DE BUSSY.

I the sticks.

[*For some moments THE MAN has been standing, and softly approaches the gentlemen from behind, without being perceived by them, and at the strongest point of their excitement places his hand familiarly on DE BRÉZÉ'S shoulder.*

THE MAN (*smiling, to DE BRÉZÉ, who turns round astounded*).

To drub a cardinal of the Roman church,
A minister who guides and governs France, —
'T is grand, Brézé, nay, royal, but not easy.

[*The four lords express the liveliest astonishment.*

DE BUSSY.

Whom is this yellow-hooded knave addressing?

D'EMBRUN.

I say, De Chaulne, just lend your cane a moment.
To be apostrophized by God knows whom
Is just a little trying!

THE MAN (*impassive*).

I am Jean

Count de Créqui, Baron de Vaize, my arms
Are or, charged with a plum-tree¹ gules.
In war, my house, without resorting to
Its arriere-ban, can muster Blanchefort, Vaize,
Agoust, Montlor, and Montauban. I am
Grandee of Spain, a title due my mother,
A Farnese. General I was by sea
During the reign of Louis the Thirteenth.
Such was I once. What I am now you see;
The meanest hind stands higher in the State, --
The last ten years proscribed by Mazarin,

¹ Créquier = a wild plum-tree.

A wretched lord, whose ruin is the soil
 On which the Dukes de Lynes thrive ; a price
 Set on my head ; a lonely, wandering outcast
 Hiding himself from all and helped by none,
 Without a friend or kinsman : such I am.
 And, now all's said, what think you if we talk
 A while ?

[*The gentlemen rapidly draw near* JEAN DE CRÉQUI.

DE BRÉZÉ.

Your hand, Créqui ! God's death ! our lot
 Links us together. They dare outrage me
 And dared to outlaw you.

DE BUSSY (*observing the features of DE CRÉQUI with the
 air of one trying to recall something to memory*).

[*To* COUNT JEAN.]

Yes, 't is Créqui

Your memory is not dead among us.

[*All shake hands with* COUNT JEAN.

DE CHAULNE.

We

Were speaking of you scarce a moment past.

COUNT JEAN.

Thanks, gentlemen.

D'EMBRUN (*examining the costume of JEAN DE CRÉQUI, with
 a gesture of astonishment*).

Count Jean ! Well, hang me, if
 I'd ever know you ! Faith, you are disguised !

COUNT JEAN.

No ; aged. To age a wretched man. Brézé,
 Ten years of exile count twice ten of life.

[*To the four gentlemen.*]

And now what is your object, gentlemen?
Revenge? I bring it with me. But, good heavens!
Make less hubbub and better play your cards.
For me, I count that gambler laughable,
And hateful too, who slaps, at every trick,
The table with his fists; who howls with rage,
Cursing his aces or his knave of hearts,
Bawling his losses and the cards he holds.
Through all this din the hidden steel is whetting.
For never yet was there a Henry the Third
Who was much troubled by a blustering Guise.
Assail your foe, as policy requires,
With outery or in shadow,—Richelieu in
The light of noon, but Mazarin at dark.
To-day the mine then, cut and thrust to-morrow.
In ambush half the battle's ever won.
And so, be calm, Brézé, make no more scenes.
Say nothing of your wrongs. Take this advice:
Be sure to keep your office near the King.
Be not afraid; 't will be a noble struggle.
Now, if some one of you should like to know
What object I have had in borrowing
These rags from strollers, why, that is my secret;
And I intend to keep it. Nay, besides,
It is a garb well-suited to an age
As vulgar, false, and double-faced as this,—
An age in which there's nothing great, except
The public shame; in which where'er we gaze
We see buffoons and fools and charlatans!
Yes, 't is a farce in which all honour's lost,—
Both yours and mine. On one stage struts De Retz,
And Mazarin upon the other stands,
While Austria holds the manuscript and prompts.
Now I, Jean de Créqui, an outlawed peer,
Considering all shame has left our France,

[*He goes to the table on which stand juggling-cups.*

Who gives herself to quacks, become one too !
And therefore, gentlemen, a very scamp,
I'll raise uproarious scandal in the streets,
When such seems needful, and, as if the court,
The parliament, the treasury, the Fronde
His Eminence, the clergy, and Sorbonne
Were all my sole concern. My brazen laugh
Shall spread dismay around among you all !
Ah well ! But is this mocking travesty
Alone my aim ? No, no, my gentle friends ;
I have a resolute soul, and help the wronged,
And snap my fingers in the face of power.
But 't is not to my taste to play the censor ;
Though rather liking my fantastic role,
To-morrow, if I may, I'll drop the mask.
" But do you not," you'll say, " desire at least
To hurl a thunderbolt at Mazarin's head
From out a cloudless sky, avenge us all,
And repossess your heritage at last ? "
No, gentlemen, no, no ; although the blood
Beats proudly 'neath this doublet, I'm too old
To be wrought up to such a point ; and though —
As I shall show you — Mazarin must fall,
(At least I think and hope so), still, revenge
Is not my aim, victorious or victim.
In a few words I'll tell what's in my heart.
Ten years exiled, my soul was still in France,
My soul, alas ! and all my hopes were there.
A child, at once my joy, remorse, and duty,
A dawning ray that lit these dusky brows
And rested faithful on this prostrate head,
When every other light for me was veiled.
A child, a girl to-day — But why relate
A tale to you that touches me alone ?

The ghastly secret's hidden in a tomb.
My pure and lowly dove knows nothing of it,
And ne'er shall learn why I love her so.
But, friends, ten years — ten years, this very month —
Have fled since I have seen that angel! Well,
I cannot live except I hear the voice
Whose music thrills my soul, except I see
The eyes that flame across my troubled gaze, —
In fine, except she's mine! Ah, sad the lot
The exile bears! Then also round herself
All's ominous and dim. Did I not say
She was an orphan? She needs all my care.
The last four years I've lost all trace of her.
(My enemies would let no letter reach me);
I know not where she's living at this hour.
O God! to see her once again! These tears!
To be allowed to live in France, and dwell
By her dear side, I've begged and prayed and done
A hundred craven deeds, — told Mazarin
He was illustrious; from Madrid and Rome
Have written to the King — Of no avail!
They would not let me come. At last I said
Within myself: 'Tis time to make an end!
You now the reasons know why I, proscribed,
Am in this city; why arrayed in this
Strange, loathsome livery I pledge my life
To such a dark, portentous enterprise,
In which God aids me, and which haply may,
In a swift moment, change the form of France
And aspect of the world by one deep, sudden,
And terrific shock. [*After a moment's silence.*] I've
told you all;
No further question. Recognize me not;
Avoid my path; but, in your strength and numbers,
Indignant, dumb, be ready for the day

When sudden from the shadow I cry out,
Rising before your 'wildered eyes : "Come on !
The work is done. Speed fast !"

DE BRÉZÉ.

Rely on us.

[*The four lords grasp his hands in silence again with more enthusiasm than ever.*

COUNT JEAN.

I do. Farewell. The hour draws near when I
Would be alone.

[*He conducts the four lords to one of the streets entering the square, then returns to the front of the theatre, and again falls into deep and anxious reverie.*
The lamplighter approaches, lights the lamp, and passes.

COUNT JEAN (*pensive, his forehead resting on his hand*).

This unknown woman ! Strange !

[*It is now quite dark. In the distant houses some windows are lit. TAGUS appears at the back of the square, and runs towards COUNT JEAN with an expression of strange and bewildered joy.*

SCENE VIII.

COUNT JEAN, TAGUS.

TAGUS.

Oh ! master, thanks ! But for you I was hanged !
I owe my freedom, so they said, to you.
Now, master, lend an ear to what I tell you :
The tawny gypsy lives for him that gives

Him life, and dies for him that saves him. Well !
 I am your slave, and where you go, I follow.
 If you clutch one end of a red-hot bar,
 I'll clutch the other ; and I'll say to all :
 " See yonder worthy gentleman ! I love him !
 Without his help I should be leading now
 A precious dance. Without his help, rocked on
 A gibbet by the evening breeze, like one
 Caught by the hair while passing 'neath a tree
 In some enclosure hemmed by livid walls,
 I should be gently brushing with my toes
 The tops o' the undergrowth ! " I'm yours, my master.

COUNT JEAN.

All right. Tagus, I trust you too. Go now.

TAGUS.

The Louvre is the King's ; the booth is ours.
 I needs must take it with me.

[*He sets to work briskly to demolish the booth, pulls up the poles, takes down the hangings and places them on the little hand-cart, which he also loads with the table, chairs, big chest, and all the other chattels belonging to the mountebank.* COUNT JEAN *meanwhile looks on thoughtfully.*

COUNT JEAN.

Where shall I

Find you again ?

TAGUS (*all the time working*).

Near the Baudoyer gate,
 In the Orme-Saint-Gervais inn.

COUNT JEAN.

Well, well, make haste.

TAGUS (*stopping*).

And, by the way, sergeants are sorry creatures.
They sparkle in the distance, but when one
Gets at close quarters —

[*He draws from his breeches a paper which he hands to*
COUNT JEAN.

Master, this is all
I could find in their pockets.

COUNT JEAN (*unfolding the paper, and reading it by the
light of the lantern lit at the corner of the street*).

“You can trust

The bearer of the present” — signed “Mazarin.”

Indeed? Why, at a crisis this might be
A vast convenience.

[*He puts the paper in his pocket. The work of TAGUS is
some time finished. The entire booth is on the hand-
cart. TAGUS approaches COUNT JEAN and takes his
hand.*

COUNT JEAN.

Go.

[TAGUS harnesses himself to the hand-cart, and goes out
drawing it. When he has disappeared COUNT JEAN
looks towards the corner of the square which GUILLOT-
GORJU pointed out to him.

There's nothing yet!

[*Returning to the front of the theatre.*

Perhaps — but no —

[*Three blows struck in the hollow of the hands are heard.*

The signal 't is! At last!

[*Raising his voice.*] God alone's master. Compiègne
and Pierrefonds!

[*A woman, quite young, in black, with a long black lace
veil, issues at the back of the square, from the angle
pointed out by Guillot-Gorju, and advances cautiously
and with slow steps towards the court.*

SCENE IX.

COUNT JEAN, *a YOUNG GIRL, veiled.*THE GIRL (*in a whisper*).

A friend? Is't you?

COUNT JEAN (*equally lowering his voice*).

Yes, madame, I.

THE GIRL.

Alone?

COUNT JEAN.

Alone. Fear not.

THE GIRL (*advancing toward him*).

Well, then?

COUNT JEAN.

Things could not be
In better shape. We'll break through bolts and bars.
The captive's saved, since Pierrefonds is his prison,
I know Pierrefonds. And friends disguised as clowns
And soldiers will assist. No danger. If
This jailer, gained by you, is trusty, we
Without great effort shall deliver him.
I answer for success.

THE GIRL.

The road by which
You reach the donjon-keep I can make smooth.
Attend: a week ago the doctors said
That if he never saw a human face,
Mere lassitude, in spite of all their care,
Would kill the captive; nay, e'en as it is,

He's dying of his duress, and must hear
 Some voice, at least, sing in a neighbouring room.
 By favour of the jailer, whom I gained,
 Of whom I am believed to be a daughter,
 I have been chosen to administer
 This only remedy of his wasting grief.
 Now, on the day appointed we, my friend, —
 You on the outside, I within, — shall break,
 If God works for us, through these fearful walls,
 Escape, and give back happiness and home,
 The air and light of heaven and life and soul
 To this poor prisoner.

COUNT JEAN.

But once free, we must
 Take measures so he be not caught again.
 Where will you hide him?

THE GIRL.

There is near Compiègne,
 Deep in the woods, a little north Pierrefonds,
 A huge old castle full of secret haunts, —
 Plessis-les-Rois, — built far from cities, planned
 For shelter in the civil wars; where I
 Was born, and where, alas! my mother died.
 Since then 't is tenantless. We'll guide him there
 Through secret doors concealed from all but me —

COUNT JEAN (*who has listened to THE YOUNG GIRL with
 ever-increasing agitation*).

Great heavens! Madame! You're Alix de Ponthieu!

THE GIRL.

'T is true. How have you learned?

COUNT JEAN (*falling on his knees*).

Madame, I swear,
 Before high heaven, the risk you run is awful!
 Withdraw at once — I beg you on my knees —
 From such a dark and tragic enterprise!
 I am not he you think. I am a man
 Who saw your birth, and who, alas! since then,
 Consumed by one fell thought, has suffered much, —
 An ancient servant of your noble mother,
 Who hides his rights and mission, as he ought,
 And comes to make atonement 'neath your shadow;
 A wretched man, who, if employed by God
 In your behalf, shall save you every sorrow
 And give you every joy, and yet whose name
 You'll never know; a lion to defend,
 A dog to love you!

ALIX.

Sir!

COUNT JEAN.

You called me friend,

A while ago. I am a soldier, old,
 Grey-bearded, and I weep! Judge by these tears
 The feelings of my heart. Oh, trust my words!
 Ah! madame, have some pity and some faith.
 Draw near this lamp and let me see your face.
 [ALIX approaches the lantern. He gazes on her with a
kind of adoration.

How tall you're grown and fair! Oh, what delight
 To see you once again! 'Tis ten years since, —
 Ten weary years! — You've lost all memory of me,
 Yet round that castle where none dwell to-day,
 My God! I saw you when you were a child, —
 As high as this, — with blushing, rosy face,
 Running amid the flowers through sunlit-fields!

Poor child! Ah, trust your friend! who, on his soul,
Tells you the truth! One day you were afraid.
You chanced to meet some wandering gypsies, madame,
And ran to me!

ALIX.

It's true. I recollect.

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, you begin to see! Then let my voice
Withhold you! What, a woman! a young girl!
Why, those who tamper with the bolts that lock
The prisons of the State do risk their heads!
The project's dreadful; 't is a crime! an outrage!
'T is utter madness! What! you to attack
The Cardinal himself? And then this prisoner —
Why, what is he to you?

ALIX.

I love him.

COUNT JEAN.

Love him?

ALIX.

Did you suppose that I was acting thus
Because of matters that affect the State?

COUNT JEAN (*aside*).

Oh, fate has seized me with relentless grasp,
As does his prey the tiger!

ALIX.

Yes, I love him!

And feel Heaven sent me to his aid. You see
To guardians left while yet a little child,
Bereft of parents, friendless and uncared for,
None heeded me, and so my tutors were

The fields and skies alone ; and in the depths
Of solitudes I passed my life in dreams.
'T was thus that God prepared, far from the light,
My soul to hail a love unlike the common.
Do you, who love me also, and whom God
Has sent to aid me, listen to my words.
The road that leads from Montdidier to Roye
Lies near a manor where I was last year.
One evening, as I looked across the plain,
I saw a prisoner and his guards approach.
The guards required possession of my prison.
As chatelaine all my keys are due my King,
My Suzerain, and I obeyed. At night
I dared to creep along a path of which
None knows, but me, the outlet, and I reached,
Curious and unobserved, that vaulted dungeon.
What I saw there I never shall forget.
The grated loop-hole was lit up outside.
The prisoner kept pacing up and down
Beneath the vault. Although you never saw him,
You doubtless know the horrible sight that met
My gaze. I marked four haggard faces in
The shadow ; but none spoke. It was a tomb ;
And I, with brow more pale than that of one
On whom the axe is falling, chilled with fear,
Gazed on this spectre, moving to and fro,
Guarded by executioners. How long
Did I continue there ? I cannot say.
The morrow, at the dawn, captain and guards
All vanished like the phantom of a dream.
What need to tell you more ? Since that same hour
My soul is as the soul of one possessed.
Be it for weal or woe, illusion, madness,
One thought absorbs it. Everywhere I go,
This captive follows, passing like a shadow

With outstretched arms, then fades into the night.
I will deliver him. Who is this victim?
'T is clear he's young and can have done no wrong.
By what right do those executioners
Change life for him into a hideous dream?
What mystery is this? Ah, well! to be
Entirely frank, by dint of pitying him
I learned to love him. I found out he was
Removed to Pierrefonds. I desire to save him,
And save him surely shall! What you're about
To say to me, I to myself have said
A hundred times. 'T is madness, ruin, frenzy.
I know nought of him, and I might select
Some fair young lord. Well, then, suppose all true, —
I love him; and my fixed resolve to free him
Is in me more than purpose, 't is a flame,
A fury, a volition that devours
My soul! O God! I see him always there!
I know not what name you may give to this;
For me, I feel 't is love!

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, what a sad
And wild illusion! poor young soul! Alas!
You never had the counsels of a mother.

ALIX.

How much he suffers! Ah, have pity on him!

COUNT JEAN.

You never saw his face.

ALIX.

Yes, in my dreams,

COUNT JEAN.

And in your dreams do other visions come?
Do you see, too, the scaffold and the Grève?
The awful judge, purveyor to the tomb,
And the death-sentence read by the torches' glare?

ALIX.

If I do not save him, I lose myself.
God wills it. I his cell shall open, or
My tomb.

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, move no further — 't is your death:
I know it well — in this insane adventure,
At once impossible and sinister!
By your dead parents, by their soul and yours,
By that mysterious tie that binds us both,
Me, old in years, and you, in youth's first bloom,
Alix, I pray, — and I forbid this thing!

ALIX.

A voice from heaven I hear that brings to me
A different mandate. Be you who you may,
I cannot slight it. You forbid in vain.
For — heed me well, my friend! — although my mother,
That angel fallen asleep before her hour,
Although the Marquis de Créqui, my father,
Should leave the tomb on purpose to prevent me,
God pardon me, I would not yield!

COUNT JEAN.

Well, go!

God knows alone whither your steps may lead.
For me my only task is now to follow,
To love you, aid you, and outlive you never!

ALIX.

To-morrow I'll expect you.

COUNT JEAN.

The hour ?

ALIX.

At midnight.

COUNT JEAN.

The place ?

ALIX.

Behind the arsenal.

COUNT JEAN.

I shall

Be there.

ALIX (*holding out her hand, which he takes and presses to his lips*).

'T is well. [*She goes away. He falls on his knees*]

COUNT JEAN.

O God ! O merciful God ! do Thou,
Hope of the sinking ship, protect this child
Whom fate is hurrying through the shades of night !

ACT II.

SCENE. — *A very gloomy chamber with ogive vault, paved with broad flagstones, hung with scarlet velvet fringed with gold, and furnished with large fauteuils with gilt arms and tapestried backs. The aspect of this room is at once sinister and magnificent. On the left, in a corner, an immense bed of red damask and tapestry covered with a rich lace counterpane, with posters and a canopy, the top of which is of wrought gold. On the right, in another corner, a lofty chimney-place with iron bark, adorned with flower-de-luces. This sheet is so large that it fills up the entire rear of the chimney. On the right, also, a table covered with a velvet cloth, and resting on a square carpet of Gobelins. On the table a Venetian mirror. Above the bed, a big ebony crucifix with an ivory Christ, not Jansenist, — that is to say, with arms held out.*

In a corner on the right, near the table, a part of the hangings has been torn and shows the naked wall, on which are seen some strange designs engraved in the stone. A big nail lies on the table.

No light enters the chamber except through a long, grated window in the back, which is reached by three stone steps. The ray of light which passes through this window has fallen on the pavement in a manner that shows clearly to the eye. The bay of the window gives an idea of the enormous thickness of the walls.

The rising of the curtain shows a strange kind of figure standing near the table. At first sight it is impossible to guess either the age or sex of this figure, which is covered with a long robe of violet velvet, the head being entirely set in a mask of black velvet that covers the hair as well as the face, and reaches down to the shoulders. A little iron padlock closes the mask behind. When the robe opens a little it displays a dress of dark satin and the contours of a young man. This prisoner appears plunged in deep and painful reverie.

Quite at the back, above the window, in a little dark gallery which begins at the spandrel of the vault and runs round the entire wall of the dungeon, communicating with the chamber by a gilded wooden ladder which rests against the hangings on the left, an old halberdier, with white hair and grey beard, is dimly seen. His face is crossed by a black band that covers an eye. This soldier, standing silent and motionless in the darkness like a statue, holds a long

pistol in his right hand and a naked sword in his left : his halberd, leaning against an angle in the ribs of the vault, glistens in the shadow.

Above the ladder, on the left, is an iron door, half seen under a rich portière.

SCENE I.

THE MASK ; *at the back*, THE SOLDIER.

THE MASK (*raising his head despondently and speaking as if with an effort*).

For life ! [*He turns his head as if to look around him.*

A tomb ! And I 'm scarce sixteen !

[*He marches with heavy steps towards the back of the dungeon and appears to contemplate the light from the window projected on the pavement at his feet.*

How slowly creeps along that pallid ray !

[*He seems to count the flagstones and measure a certain distance with his eyes.*

Ah ! the fifth flag 's far from it still. [*He listens.*]

No sound !

[*He returns to the front of the theatre with hasty steps, and exclaims in a despairing outburst : —*

In two dark dungeons, night and day, at once

To live ! Ah, yes ! these executioners —

With what design, O Lord ! permit'st thou this ? —

My body have in one locked up, my face

In this grim mask,—the ghastlier of the two.

[*He appears to examine himself in the Venetian glass placed on the table.*

At times a hideous phantom in this glass

Appals me when I pass, and runs to meet me.

It is myself ! And when between the bars

I look, the peasant hurries by in fear.

[*He sits down and muses.*

My soul has not her freedom e'en in sleep.
 Never in dreams hear I the voice of friend ;
 And when I quit my couch at morning, I
 Am not a man who comes and goes and talks,
 Bubbling with life and pride. I am a corpse,—
 A corpse that thinks, but confined, though alive.
 'T is horrible ! Erstwhile, when yet a child,
 I had a garden where I went at dawn ,
 Saw birds and sunbeams, colours, butterflies
 That gleamed like gold, and sported mid the flowers.
 And now — [*He rises.*]

Oh, what a shameful martyrdom
 I suffer. Are there tigers, then, that say
 To one another, " We will take a child,—
 A fair and innocent and feeble child,—
 And shut him in a tomb thus masked. He shall
 Grow up to manhood, feeling manhood's instincts
 Ooze drop by drop, e'en through his prison walls,
 And penetrate his being. He shall know,
 Though in his granite tower immured, the thrills
 The springtime sends to plant and tree and bird ;
 And from his far-off dungeon he shall view,
 With pallid face, the bare-foot girls that pass
 Across the plain. Cheating his listlessness
 With charcoal scribblings on those ancient walls,
 Or graving his vague fancies with a nail,
 He shall wear out his soul in childish things !
 The wrinkles that will line his brow will be
 But barren furrows. Weeks and months and years
 Will pass and blanch his hair, and turn his eyes
 To hollow caverns. Slowly, step by step,
 The man shall change and fade into a ghost,
 Until some day he wakes with frightened eyes
 That tell him, he who ne'er knew youth, is old !"
 Alas ! I am so now. My weary soul
 Is faint. A child in fears, a grandsire grey

In thought, but never man. O God ! O God !

Hast thou no pity !

[He throws himself into the fauteuil, with head and arms flat on the table, as if plunged in despair. After a moment of silence he rises painfully, and again examines the ray of light which, during all this scene, is insensibly moving across the pavement.]

It has made thus far

Not half its passage.

[He lets his head fall in his anguish, and appears to sink again into his reverie.]

Oh, my mother ! How

I could have loved thee ! I am stifling !

[He goes to the window in the back, mounts the steps, and gazes on the country.]

God !

How white and joyous yonder smoke ascends

And melts into the heavens.

[At the back of the dungeon from the top of the steps.]

What ! does man

Collect his sheaves, the bee her honey gather,

The river hurry on, the cloud float by ?

Does Nature sing and quiver in the woods ?

Does all the earth on which we live become,

With sounds and harmonies, most musical,

And glow with beauty ? And does nothing tell

The world and cry to men, " You're happy, you

Are free " ? Ah, well ! within this dungeon, shut

By darksome bolts, bereft of the fresh air

And pleasant sunlight, envying to the hind

His smoky cot, a captive pines away ;

A victim done to death by prison bars ;

A nameless man no one hath ever seen, —

A mystery, a shadow, without eyes

For others, or the sunlight for himself !

A sad, dejected prisoner, who weeps

Without — oh, crown of all his woes — the power
To even dry his tears !

[He returns to the front of the theatre.

Oh, but to bathe,

In the air that trembles everywhere around,
My breast, my hair, my face, free for one day,
And then to die ! But no ! Thou hideous mask !

[He tries to tear off the mask with both hands.

Never to spread my wings out in the heavens,
Never to proudly float through azure skies —
I cannot burst thee, frightful chrysalis !

O rage !

[He sits down, lets his head fall on the table, and is heard sobbing. After a few moments he lifts his head.

And yet that angel ! Let me not

BlaspHEME ! The hour draws near.

[He again examines the distance traversed by the ray.

The ray will soon

O'ertake the mark I placed on the fifth flag.

[Returning.] Her coming lulls to sleep my anguished
soul,

And in my heart there is a boundless love.

[Notes of a lute are heard, apparently coming from a neighbouring chamber.

'T is she ! I hear her ! *[He falls on his knees.]*

Blessed be Thou, O Lord !

[Deep silence. A voice rises in the same place as the lute, and seems to accompany it. The prisoner listens on his knees, in an attitude of prayer and ecstasy.

THE VOICE.

With songs the heavens are filling ;
God's shadow round thee set !
Yield not to sorrow chilling !
Thy soul holds visions thrilling
Thy heart shall perfect yet !

The shadow sweets discloses
 To the poor soul afire ;
 God the same hour disposes
 Bright stars and dewy roses
 To sate the heart's desire !

The night from lakelets sombre,
 From hills that sleeping lie,
 Hears voices without number.
 They 're songs, in time of slumber,
 The shadow sends the sky.

Yearn not for sunlight streaming
 Thy pallid brow above.
 The dawn is near day's beaming,
 The night doth hold morn's gleaming,
 The shadow holdeth love !

THE MASK (*on his knees, turned towards the chimney from which the song appears to come*).

Oh, come !

[*The back of the chimney turns slowly on itself like a door. A ray of light appears through this opening, on which*
 THE MASK, *fascinated, fixes his gaze, saying in a low voice.*

Come now !

SCENE II.

THE MASK ; ALIX, *at the back, in the chimney* ; THE JAILER ; *above, in the gallery*, THE SOLDIER. ALIX, *from where she is standing, gazes on the prisoner with eyes full of love and compassion.*

THE MASK.

How beautiful she is !

Oh, what were life and light and joy with her !

[*Clasping his hands.*] Ah, lovely being, maid, enchanting vision !

Let me adore thee ; for, as from a star
That lights up all the heavens, rays divine
Dart from thy luminous eyes and daze my soul !
While gazing on thee I see plainly God !
The head thou riskest in this sinister place
Is to my eyes with wondrous halos crowned ; —
For thou must be an angel and of all
God's angels best and sweetest, who dost come
Day after day into this hideous tomb ;
Whose gracious presence in these gloomy walls
Makes a poor veiled and shackled captive thrill
With such deep love in spite of such deep hate !
Since first thou camest, it is now a month ;
And, as thou see'st, each succeeding day
But brings an added rapture with it !

ALIX (*advancing towards him*).

Friend !

THE MASK (*without rising*).

Come hither now, O fair and stainless brow,
And let me gaze upon thee, kneeling thus !
This above all, swear thou wilt come to-morrow.
Thy hand ! Ah, could I only kiss that hand !
Adorable hand, so pretty and so pure !

[*He presses the hand of ALIX to his breast.*

And yet I swear that God has placed behind
This mask a mouth, behind this shroud a heart.

[*He rises.*

I needs must frighten thee, is it not so ?
Just now I was alone, and watched the hour
When God doth send thee hither ; and I cursed —
Forgive, O Lord ! — that God who sends such joy !

Methought — you see I counted every moment —
The sunbeam took more than its usual time
To win to yonder flag. Then this black mask —
This vault of hell ! He would have called me mad
Who saw me then ! My mind was wandering —
I know not where — in quest of gardens, fancies,
Of tinted fields all filled with fluttering swarms
Whose wings I envied. Weeping I gave ear,
In hopes to catch thy steps ; and now I smile !
Thou canst not see it ! Ah, how fair thou art !
How charming ! Madame [*He conducts her to the fauteuil.*],
Pray sit there, and we
Will talk. If thou wert near me all the day,
E'en in my gloomy tower, all the day
That tower would echo laughter. O my love !
In truth, I wearied for a sight of thee !

ALIX.

O misery ! Each time I enter here
My heart is tortured, poor unhappy youth !

THE MASK.

No, speak not thus. A truce to mournful words ;
For blest be thou ! I see thee, and am happy.
To see thee ! does not that suffice ? I dread
Whate'er might scare away the joy that sings
Within my soul when listening to thy voice,
Like to a bird that's startled by a sound !

ALIX.

Would I might see your face !

THE MASK (*taking her hand*).

Thy hand ! I crave it.

ALIX (*perceiving that THE SOLDIER posted in the gallery is moving, runs to THE JAILER, who has remained on guard in the chimney, and anxiously points to THE SOLDIER*).

That man ?

THE JAILER (*interrupting her, in a low voice*).

Is with us, madame, and your friend.

THE MASK (*leading ALIX back and making her sit down*).

I know not why you should run from me thus.

I love you, and would see your face. Stay there.

ALIX.

But yet we must consider serious things.

The time has come to do so. Pray attend.

My visits, long mysterious, to this place

Have had a purpose.

THE MASK.

And that purpose is —

ALIX.

To rescue you.

THE MASK.

Oh, heaven!

ALIX.

And I have

The means.

THE MASK (*falling on his knees*).

O God! then Thou hast heard my prayers!

Freedom and love! — completeness of the soul!

Two rays of light which, hidden from the damned,

Make perfect day throughout Thy paradise! [*He rises.*]

Free! free! Oh, heaven! how dazzling is the thought!

[*To ALIX.*] But how can you accomplish this? The tower

Is guarded well! No matter! Tell me not
That this is so. I will believe you, for
All's possible to angels of your kind!
Will it be soon?

ALIX.

I hope so. Yes, perhaps —
[*She goes to THE JAILER and speaks to him in a low tone.*
When will the attempt be made?

THE JAILER (*in a low voice*).

Not yet.

ALIX (*in the same tone*).

But when?

THE JAILER (*in the same tone*).

The court is at Compiègne. We might lose all.
It's not the time for such a stroke as this,
But later on.

ALIX.

You'll aid me?

THE JAILER (*aside, after protesting his fidelity to ALIX by a gesture*).

Yes, of course!

Not such a dolt! The lady gives each day
Ten louis for each interview; and so
I do not care how long this lasts. He were
A fool, indeed, who killed the hen that laid
Such golden eggs!

ALIX (*to THE MASK*).

You are mistaken if
You think that I am daughter to that man.
I'm nobly born, a Créqui, and my name
Is Jeanne Alix de Ponthieu. The Rohans,

The Guises, Chateaupers, are of my kin;
Peers, dukes, among my ancestors I count,
Marshals and admirals and constables.

THE MASK (*as if speaking to himself*).

Mine, too, are great.

ALIX (*joyfully*).

So much the better!

THE MASK.

Ah!

ALIX.

But — now I think of it — you spoke some words
About your ancestors —

THE MASK (*as if awaking from his reverie*).

What! I? Oh, no!

ALIX.

You always told me you knew not your name.

THE MASK.

I know it not, in truth.

ALIX.

Do not deceive me!

THE MASK.

My angel!

ALIX.

For I long to learn —

THE MASK (*interrupting her*).

No! no!

Hell wreaks its vengeance on me. Ask no more.
My crime was perpetrated on the day

That saw my birth, and so I was condemned!
 Ask me no more! My house is fraught with portents!
 I feel, while speaking of it e'en to you,
 That I am pale!

ALIX.

This secret —

THE MASK.

Is so grave

That it would crush you!

ALIX.

Let us share it then!

THE MASK.

Never! Such burdens are not placed on those
 We love.

ALIX.

Though this vault fall on me, yet I
 Will know your name!

THE MASK (*rising in a fit of passionate emotion*).

Give heed! I will not tell it.

That name you'll never know! For uttering it
 A good old servant died; and yet he did
 But whisper in my ear. The martyrdom
 I suffer has its source in that alone
 Which I heard spoken! Would this secret had
 To me been ne'er revealed! A humble child,
 I lived 'neath starlit skies. I had no name,
 But Nature was my own; and freedom, sunlight,
 Fresh fields, and blooming swards I held in fee.
 And in my eyes was God, and on my brow
 And in my heart. But soon as this fell secret
 Was shed like poisonous liquid on my soul,
 It held but darkness; and my sadness showed
 I knew my name! One evening, as I lay

Upon my couch, a band of men rushed in.
 I rose, and in my naked feet I ran
 Into another room, where I became
 Unconscious. When I woke I scarce recalled
 What had occurred; but on my face I felt
 A something that disturbed me. Then, at once,
 As I passed near a glass, I shrank in horror.
 There I had seen myself! And since that day
 In darkness do I dwell. And since that day
 With piteous cries, I make appeal to God
 To give me back again the vanished light!
 [*Wildly.*] Am I a man? And have I a man's name?
 There's no one can say yes to this but I,
 And I say no! [*To ALIX.*] Nay, you who come within
 This dwelling-place of mine, are you even sure
 That that which meets your eyes this very hour
 Is aught else but a shadow and a vision?
 Why speak to me of flight? Ah, ye who live!
 Let the dead slumber in their gloomy realm!
 This mask, — it is my face and I'm a phantom
 Oh! I am dying! Air!
 [*He falls fainting into the fauteuil.*]

ALIX (*supporting him with her arms*).

That awful mask

Is stifling him.

[*To THE JAILER.*] Ah, have some mercy on
 This poor unhappy captive!
 [*Pointing to the padlock.*] Open it!

THE JAILER.

Madame, it's certain death!

ALIX.

For taking off

This mask but for a moment?

THE JAILER.

Yes.

ALIX.

'T is shameful

THE JAILER.

And, then, this is the time the governor
In this part of the castle makes his rounds.

ALIX (*searching in the pocket of her skirt*).

Good God! how lucky 't is I have my purse!

[*She draws out a purse which she hands to* THE JAILER.

In this are twenty louis. They are yours,
If for an instant he but breathe at ease!

THE JAILER (*taking the purse after some hesitation*).

So be it!

[*He takes a little key from a bunch and prepares to use it.*ALIX (*leaning over the prisoner, who is in a faint*).

Ah, this mask bears harder far

On me than him. But I shall see him then!

Shall free him for a time!

[*For some moments* THE SOLDIER, *posted in the gallery, has appeared to observe the scene that is passing below him with more attention. At the moment when* THE JAILER *puts the key in the little lock of the mask, and while* ALIX, *full of joy and anxiety, supports the head of the prisoner with her hands, THE SOLDIER suddenly leans over the baluster of the gallery, and fires a pistol at the prisoner, breaking the glass on the table near him. At the report of the pistol all turn round frightened, and the opening of the iron door of the dungeon is heard.*

THE JAILER (*turning towards THE SOLDIER*).

Ah, treacherous knave!

[*The door opens. Enters M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN, Governor of the castle of Pierrefonds, attended by Turnkeys and Soldiers.*

SCENE III.

The same. M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN. *Soldiers, Turnkeys.*

THE SOLDIER (*shouting from the gallery*).

Help! help! Be on your guard! Let some one search
The jailer!

[*At a sign from the Governor, the Soldiers surround and search THE JAILER.*

ALIX (*aside*).

Heavens!

THE SOLDIER (*continuing*).

His pocket holds, you'll find,
A purse of twenty louis — count! — which he
Received before my eyes from yonder lady,
As recompense, if he'd unmask the man.
I had my orders, and I fired.

[*The Soldiers have found the purse.*

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS (*after counting*).

The sum

Is twenty louis!

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

What! a woman here?

What means —

THE JAILER (*thunderstruck, in a low tone to ALIX*).

A man of yours ! And these are they
You trust !

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor, pointing to ALIX*).

I let her enter. To fulfil
My duty, I decided to hear all,
So that I might inform myself of all.
[*Pointing to the prisoner.*] But when I saw they would
unmask his face,
I thought it time to stop.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

You acted wisely.
[*He hastily locks the padlock of the mask and puts the key
in his pocket. Then he turns to the Soldiers, who sur-
round THE JAILER.*
Away with him to prison : let her stay.
We wish to question her.

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor*).

May I, my lord,
A few words speak in private ?
[*He descends from the gallery. The Soldiers lead away
THE JAILER.*

THE JAILER (*menacing him with his fist.*)

Traitor !
[*THE JAILER and his guards go out. M. DE LA FERTÉ-
IRLAN dismisses the other Turnkeys by a sign and
turns to THE SOLDIER, who has taken a position near
him in front of the stage.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well ?

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the iron bars of the casement*).
Approach, my lord, that window.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *goes towards the casement and ascends the steps leading to it.*

Shake the bar

Across the centre.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *does as directed. The bars pointed out by THE SOLDIER are easily unfastened by the effort and leave a wide open space.*

What say you to that?

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*examining the bars, which appear to have been sawn with care, and then dexterously fitted into their places*).

Without you —

THE SOLDIER (*going to the window*).

Bid that soldier to come up

Whose gleaming halberd you must notice, — there,
Beneath the tower.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*looking out*).

'Tis the man on guard.

THE SOLDIER.

Under this casement. Yes.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *opens the door of the dungeon a little and gives an order in a low voice to the Turnkeys who are stationed outside. He then walks back towards THE SOLDIER, who has again returned to the front of the stage.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

My brave companion !

The King's your debtor. Tell me, do you know
The woman's name ?

THE SOLDIER.

No.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

'T is a plot!

THE SOLDIER.

I think so.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

I shall take care that you're well paid for this,
And well rewarded.

THE SOLDIER.

Ah, here comes the soldier.

*Enter TAGUS, in the midst of the Turnkeys, in the dress
of a soldier with a haversack on his back.*

SCENE IV.

The same. TAGUS.

THE SOLDIER (*to* FERTÉ-IRLAN).

With your good leave, my lord.

[*To* TAGUS.] Come here, you knave!

[TAGUS approaches, at the same time casting a look of the
deepest astonishment at THE SOLDIER.

Let him be searched, my lord, before you, now.

At once, and without mercy. He has hid

A ladder of rope within his haversack.

TAGUS (*whose astonishment increases more and more*).

Well, this is, I should think, a puzzle!

[*The haversack of TAGUS is searched and a ladder of rope
is found in it, supplied with the necessary cramps.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Yes !

THE SOLDIER (*unfolding the ladder, to M. DE LA
FERTÉ-IRLAN*).

Please test it for a moment and you 'll find
It is an accurate measure of the height
Between the casement and the ground.

TAGUS.

It's all

A puzzle more and more !

THE SOLDIER (*to the Jailers, after turning towards TAGUS*).

But lest perchance
He might break loose, bind fast that rascal there.
[*Until now THE MASK has appeared to be stricken with
stupor ; he turns and lets his eyes wander around.*

THE MASK (*as if in a dream*).

Great God ! What is the purport of all this ?

[*The Jailers tie the arms of TAGUS behind his back.*FERTÉ-IRLAN (*pointing to TAGUS*).

To the dungeon !

THE SOLDIER.

No, my lord ; let him stay here.
[*To TAGUS.*] You shall be hanged, you rogue, within an
hour.

TAGUS.

Oh, very well ! I'm puzzled more than ever.

[*At a sign from the Governor, the Jailers place TAGUS in
a corner. The latter continues to watch the scene anx-
iously. ALIX is paralysed, and THE MASK seems
turned to stone.*

FERTE-IRLAN (*taking THE SOLDIER aside and speaking in a low voice*).

It's clear, my friend, there is a plot to set
The prisoner free.

THE SOLDIER (*in the same tone*).

The garrison entire
Is in it to a man. His Eminence,
Apprised on yesterday of this great peril,
Has sent me hither. 'Tis a danger which
Admits of no delay.
[*He takes a folded paper from his pocket which he hands to the Governor.*

Read !

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*reading*).

"You may trust
The bearer of the present.—*Mazarin*."
It is enough. What action should I take ?
But speak yourself. Give orders in my name.

ALIX (*aside, raising her eyes to heaven*).
O God ' show mercy to us !

THE SOLDIER (*in a loud voice to the Turnkeys*).

By the King's
Command, and for a reason to him known,
Let all the soldiers of the garrison
Return within the castle. Let the keep
Be shut, and no one dare to leave outside
A single guard. Have the portcullis lowered
And raise the bridge. Bring us the keys. Your heads
Shall answer for it.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*to the Turnkeys*).

Have you heard ? Then go !

[*The Turnkeys leave.*]

THE SOLDIER (*to FERTÉ-IRLAN*).

The garrison is numerous and armed ;
It must be carefully secured. This night
It might attempt some sudden, bold surprise
And bear the prisoner off by force. To-morrow
We shall have reinforcements.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

You are sure ?

THE SOLDIER.

His Eminence has sent some thirty archers
Belonging to his body-guard. At dawn
You 'll see them here. Meanwhile, we two must watch
The tower alone. There's many a hidden trap
Which we have reason to be wary of. .
Nay, we perhaps may have to stand a siege.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

True. Comrade, let us barricade ourselves
Right here.

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the iron door*).

That door is solid ?

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, a cannon
Might burst it open, but nought else.

ALIX (*aside*).

Alas !

There is no longer hope.

[*The Turnkeys enter again with lanterns. Night has fallen during the scene.*A TURNKEY (*presenting a bunch of keys to the Governor*).

Each door is locked.

Here are the keys.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*taking the bunch which he attaches to his belt*).

See none get out.

TURNKEY.

They 're all

Secured.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*in a low voice*).

What do you purpose afterwards ?

Ought we to keep these fellows here ?

THE SOLDIER.

Oh, no !

I doubt if they be trusty. Now we shall

Examine, if you please, this knave. [*He points to TAGUS.*FERTÉ-IRLAN (*to the Turnkeys*).

Depart !

[*The Turnkeys obey. The Governor goes to the iron door, shuts and bolts it himself, and then returns to THE SOLDIER.*

So now we are sole tenants of the prison.

None can come near us ; and we 're safe, so far.

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the back of the chimney which has remained open since the entrance of ALIX*).

Ah, pardon me ! There is a path by which

We might be reached.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*going to the chimney*).

Why, yes, indeed, you 're right.
The one through which this lady found her way.
Come, let us close it.

THE SOLDIER (*stopping him*).

No. That sheet's so thick
That none can move it except him who knows
The secret spring, of which the jailer is
Alone aware. And yet the rebels might
Find easy entrance.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Whither does it lead?

THE SOLDIER (*looking*).

Into a darkened room that neither has
A cornice nor a window; and I see
Through the dim shadow that its door's ajar.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, close it then.

[THE SOLDIER obeys, and disappears through the half-open sheet. A rattling of locks and keys is heard in the cellar, to which the opening really leads. Then THE SOLDIER reappears with two keys in his hand.]

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor*).

The keys were in the locks.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

The bolts?

THE SOLDIER (*making a gesture of driving in a bolt*).

Are shot.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

I fear there is some trap,
Some stratagem. You're sure that all is locked?

THE SOLDIER.

Yes. You can see yourself.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, let us see.

[He enters the dark cellar through the small opening.]

ALIX (*aside.*)

All's lost!

[THE SOLDIER has been walking all the time behind the Governor, following him very closely. The very moment M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN disappears in the neighbouring cellar, THE SOLDIER draws quickly the metal sheet at the back of the chimney, which closes noiselessly. Then throwing off his white wig and black band he turns to ALIX, TAGUS, and THE MASK, who are astounded. It is COUNT JEAN.]

COUNT JEAN.

All's won. 'Tis I! The jailer was
A faithless knave and cheated you.

[To THE MASK.] Last night
You slept near him, *[Pointing to TAGUS.]* my trusty
servitor.

The bars are sawn, the ladder is prepared,
And all is ready. Under lock and key,
The garrison; and under lock and key,
The governor. The jailer is in chains,
[To THE MASK.] And you are free. Let us leave here
at once.

[An outburst of joy. ALIX runs to COUNT JEAN and takes his hand, which she presses to her heart.]

THE MASK (*with effusion to COUNT JEAN*).

May God repay you!

TAGUS.

Ah, the puzzle's plain!

ALIX.

Oh, thanks!

COUNT JEAN.

My joy is quite as great as yours.

ALIX.

Dear friend!

COUNT JEAN.

But let us make all haste. Time flies!

[*He cuts with his dagger the cords that bind TAGUS, then picks up the ladder of rope which is lying on the floor.*

I'll tie the ladder to the casement bars!

[*He runs and fastens the ladder of rope to the bars of the casement, making it hang on the outside.*

TAGUS (*lifting from the table the keys of the dungeon in which the Governor has been imprisoned.*)

I'll send the keys a-whirling to the moat!

[*He flings the keys through the window.*

THE MASK (*to COUNT JEAN*).

Quick! quick! Pull off this mask!

COUNT JEAN.

Ah! let me beg

That first we leave this place. The night is dark,
We have a two hours' journey through the woods.

I will not take it off you until we reach

Plessis-les-Rois. Above all things we must

Secure our safety first. We must away
From here !

[*To TAGUS who is busily engaged in making the ladder firm.*] Where are the garments ?

TAGUS.

They 're below.

COUNT JEAN.

Where ?

TAGUS.

In a thicket.

COUNT JEAN.

Well, make haste.

[*The Governor is heard knocking violently on the back of the chimney.*

Yes, knock !

ALIX (*with her eyes fixed in joy on THE MASK*).

O rapture ! he is free !

COUNT JEAN (*takes a notebook from his pocket and a pencil, then writes on his knee*).

" Within this room

You 'll find the Governor."

[*When he has finished he tears out the leaf and fixes it on the back of the chimney to one of the tenter-hooks riveted in the cast-iron. Then he goes to the window and examines the ladder.*

[*To TAGUS.*] You 're sure it 's firm ?

TAGUS.

Oh, yes ! quite firm.

THE MASK (*to COUNT JEAN*).

The name by which you 're known ?

COUNT JEAN.

You 'll learn it later.

[The Governor continues knocking on the iron sheet.

Knock away, good man !

[He makes a sign to them all to proceed to the window.

[To TAGUS.] You first.

[Pointing to ALIX.] She after.

[To THE MASK.] Then your turn. I last.

[TAGUS takes a stride across the window, places his foot on the ladder and is seen descending. Then he disappears.

ALIX takes her turn after, assisted by COUNT JEAN.

God guard Alix !

ALIX (descending and half lost to sight behind the window).

May God the prisoner save !

[THE MASK next descends the ladder, and at the moment

COUNT JEAN places his foot on it, the curtain falls.

ACT III.

SCENE. — *A magnificent and dilapidated apartment with rich hangings falling into tatters. Architecture of the time of Henry IV. Old, high-backed chairs, the gilding of which is coming off; immense cabinets on the painted and carved beams of the ceiling, two large portraits covered with dust,— one of Louis XIII., the other of Cardinal Richlieu, gazing on each other, both full length. The hangings are blue, sprinkled with H's and flower-de-lis intersmingled with the armourial bearings of the house of Créqui. At the back, a large door surmounted by the wild plum-tree of the Créquis, under a ducal crown. On the right, in a corner, a folding door. In an angle at the back, opposite this, a sideboard. On the left, a window, and near it an old screen; on the right a table and arm-chair. The apartment has the damp and melancholy appearance of a place that has been uninhabited for many years.*

At the rising of the curtain, the QUEEN-MOTHER, KING LOUIS XIV., and CARDINAL MAZARIN are on the scene. The QUEEN in black, with jet bands; the CARDINAL in soutane, biretta, and red stockings, but without the cape belonging to his rank. He wears the blue ribbon of the order of the Holy Ghost on his neck. The KING, quite young, in black dress, over which he wears a magnificent gold brocade, blue ribbon, hat with white plumes, sword with diamond hilt, lace collar and ruffles.

The KING is a very handsome youth, with small moustaches. The CARDINAL, pallid, coughing, and broken by disease, looks like an old man, although in reality he is not yet sixty.

Two candelabra are on the table.

SCENE I.

[THE QUEEN-MOTHER, THE KING, CARDINAL MAZARIN.

THE QUEEN is standing beside the table, on which she presses her bent fore-finger. THE CARDINAL behind her, in an attitude of respect. The eyes of THE KING wander round the apartment. He is almost astounded at its dilapidated condition.

THE KING.

So, madame, this is named Plessis-les-Rois ?

[He examines the dusty chairs.]

It looks to me as if it must have been
Without a tenant for a hundred years.

[Turning back to THE QUEEN.]

Your Majesty, if you desire to speak
I am prepared to hear. The presence of
The Cardinal is, doubtless, no restraint.

[THE QUEEN approves by a sign of the head.]

As I at least conceive, you bring us here,
To this abandoned house, so that we may
Confer unwitnessed. Let it be so, though
'T were easy to have chosen a better place ;
But I will not complain of place or time,
Nor that we had to reach this charming spot
By a long passage underground that was
Exceeding tiresome and exceeding cold.
I listen, madame, with the reverence
Befits a son obedient.

THE QUEEN.

Sire, in truth

I have to speak to you of many things.
And first, the London and the Paris treaty,
Meant to be secret, has been brought to light,
And shocks the minds of men. The Emperor
Is struck with wonder, and the Catholic King
Regards it as most baneful. I, you see,
Am plain. The Genoese make you their dupe,
And Tunis corsairs devastate Provence,
Yet go unpunished. Kings should be beloved
At home, and feared abroad. Pray, do not fret
About returning to Compiègne to-night.

[She points to the door on the right]

There is a room adjoining which I had
 Made ready for your Majesty. And now
 I will resume. We are in need of money,
 And brought to want by ruinous festivals.
 The Cardinal de Richelieu cut off heads,
 But, as became a statesman of his grandeur,
 With fearless mien and in the light of day

[*Pointing to MAZARIN*

This Cardinal kills and skulks. And I do know
 Of many a pavement blood-stained in the dark,
 And in the darkness cleansed. The Pope is old ;
 And, should the conclave meet, we have no funds
 Wherewith to influence the cardinals.
 The English or the Huguenots get all.
 Oh, what a shame ! — But I will curb my wrath.
 The Dauphin regiment is malcontent
 Because a gallows-bird, a very knave,
 A sharper —

[*Pointing to MAZARIN.*

But a kinsman of my lord, —

Is made its colonel. And, three days ago,
 They marched — such bitterness is in their souls —
 With lowered pikes to the ramparts of the Louvre.
 All Paris was alarmed. But oh, no matter !
 You're in Compiègne. It boots you not to know. —
 I will speak out. There is a smouldering fire
 Throughout the provinces. The princes' claims
 Meet with no just concession, and the peace
 Made with them is but hollow. There will be,
 I fear, a rupture soon. The dukes feel outraged,
 The parliament's disgusted. Even me
 An iron hand weighs down. Against my will
 My servant, Boisthibaut, has been turned off,
 The price of bread is raised ; and, in a word,
 All things go wrong, and nothing great is willed,

And nothing wise is done. Your enemies
Are all abetted, and the State's destroyed.
These truths are plain. Ask the first president!

THE CARDINAL (*in a low tone to THE KING, with a scarcely perceptible shrug of the shoulders*).

Mathieu Molé!

THE QUEEN.

You think my words too strong:
Consult D'Estrée or Madame de Targis,
An upright woman, and in high esteem
With the late king, my lord. De Thou, alone
Untainted in these trying times: Souvré!
Ledeau, the councillor!

THE CARDINAL (*to THE KING, in a low voice*).

All imbeciles!

THE QUEEN (*to THE CARDINAL*).

What means this whispering? What calumnious hints?

THE CARDINAL (*with a profound bow to THE QUEEN*).

I merely said that these are honest people.

THE QUEEN (*pointing to MAZARIN*).

And yet each day he trenches on your rights!
And yet France is disturbed and Europe anxious!
And yet De Retz, sire, is an able man!
And yet see what men say, see what they write!
De Beaufort —

THE CARDINAL.

Retz and Beaufort! rebels both.

THE QUEEN (*to THE KING*).

Read Maynard, Coffier, Guy-Joli —

THE CARDINAL.

Lampoons !

THE QUEEN.

For God's sake, sir, be still ! A truce to speeches !
You talk so much that one can't say a word !

THE CARDINAL (*bowing to the ground*).

Speak.

THE QUEEN (*violently*).

No ! I 'm silent now !

THE CARDINAL.

Sire, may I make

Reply ?

THE KING.

Yes, do.

THE CARDINAL.

With London there 's no treaty.

Genoa ? We 've received three millions from her.

Tunis ? This very hour, along our coasts,

A hundred pirates hanged swing in the air.

The parliaments ? They 're seats of lawless hopes !

I guard their rights ; their edicts do not count.

As for the claims made by the dukes and princes,

I 'm willing that we should discuss them all.

We 'll see how nice they are. Nevers demands

The salt excises of the Rethelais

Beaufort desires to levy regiments

With perfect freedom, sire, throughout your realm ;

He leads even now a corps of infantry

To Nantes, with waving flags and sounding trumpets.

Elbeuf would have a duchy and a seat

In Parliament bestowed upon his bastard.

The Count de Soissons, whom your power offends,

Insists that you shall give to him the right
To issue patents of nobility.
Upon Thouars, Rohan has placed your flag,
But underneath his own. Bouillon requires
Sedan to be restored, and that the King
Reduce Turenne to mere liege-homage. Nay,
He urges also that the Huguenots
Shall have the right to meet. The Duke d'Orleans
Is modest to excess. He only asks,
As guerdon for the civil wars he caused,
Your pardon, with two or three towns thrown in.
D'Epernon needs Poitiers, and D'Aiguillon
Nogent; Vendome is eager to outrank
The other nobles; Conti to have gold.
The tree entire is eaten up with greed, —
The younger branches gluttonous as any.
Mercœur says to the King: "Pay off my debts."
Chabot by heaping up his valiant feats,
Regains his captainry of Blois' old castle.
In fine, to sum all up and reach an end,
The Chancellor would have his wages doubled.
And if that worthy Duke d'Augen obtain
The truncheon of a marshal for his son,
The ribbon for his brother, he will seek
No other perquisites. Such are the facts.

[THE KING *turns gravely* to THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*to* THE CARDINAL).

By heaven, sir, you triumph with much ease!
Dukes, princes, people; Paris, Genoa, Tunis,
Rome which you leave to chance, and London which
Grows bolder every day. All you may say,
Like all that I have said, imports but little.
But ah, my soul is racked! This I proclaim
Before the world! 'Tis a monstrous thing!
A low-born, common girl — your niece, forsooth! —

Should dare cast eyes upon my King of France!
 A girl whose grandsire was some sorry clerk
 Bred in Palermo, if I've heard aright.
 To forty emperors and sixty kings
 That man has dealt a buffet on the cheek!
 Must Bourbon, Austria, be dragged through mud?
 Must I be crushed except I say a yes?
 Must this unheard-of, hateful thing take place?
 Must you, sire, take a Mancini for wife?
 No! no! because I will not have it! No!
 Because 't is loathesome!

THE KING (*wounded*).

Madame —

THE QUEEN (*half-turned towards MAZARIN*).

God!

That man! Oh, heavens! what woes I have endured!
 For his ambition he would go to hell!
 And now the viper's crawling up the path
 Leads to the eagle's nest! O Jesus Christ!
 How often I have spent whole nights alone,
 Upon my balcony, at Saint-Germain,
 My head between my hands, and all my soul
 Absorbed in thinking what a shame this was!

THE KING.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

Oh, scenes like this must be deplored!
 But ah, have confidence in me, dear son!
 Such marriages as this end always ill!

THE CARDINAL (*with a low bow*).

I know what 's due the Queen, and hold my peace.
 Yet though my niece be sprung from no mean line,

And though her blood derives — when all is said —
 Some reflex splendour from the Roman purple,
 I tell my generous King, as does the Queen,
 Such marriages as this end — sometimes — ill.
 Still, for all that, they happen now and then, —
 When decency requires.

[He turns and bows profoundly to THE QUEEN.

Her majesty

Knows this right well.

THE QUEEN.

You lie, Lord Cardinal !

Your pardon, sire ; he drives me to extremes.

I am both right and wrong, — that's all the tale.

Great God ! I'd rather have Richelieu ! None dared

To slight me when your father lived. This man

Has made me mad ! I am a simple woman,

Unlearned in State affairs.

[To MAZARIN.] As you know well.

*[To THE KING.] But I am queen, a queen whom all
 neglect ;*

But I am mother, — oh, the bitter pain ! —

A mother, and they rob me of my son !

*[She breaks off. Her voice grows weak, owing to her effort
 to keep back her tears.*

My son, you will not wed this nameless girl,

Whose eyes show she's in love with D' Epernon !

'T is true.

*[She sit down, draws THE KING near her and throws her
 arms about him.*

Come here.

[Pointing to MAZARIN.] His is an evil soul.

You have too good a heart. But call to mind

His malice when you were a little boy !

Do you remember how that sordid man,

So wayward, and resentful of a word,

In mid December left you, without sheets
 Upon your bed, or fire within your room.
 Oh, I have been most keenly blamed for that !
 One day that you were going to Conflans,
 The carriage that he gave you was so old,
 The very rabble in the streets cried shame.
 Because he wished to reign and not be held
 To answer for his deeds, he ordered, sire,
 That you should not be taught the things that might
 Enlarge your mind. Nay, even history
 Was interdicted. Paris he oppressed
 In an inglorious war, — a civil war ;
 A ruthless and a most ungodly war, —
 From which you had to fly, poor frightened child !
 Your people suffered, whom he robs and starves !
 You must remember that unhappy woman
 Who on the Melun bridge of hunger died.
 He set himself up as a prince and duke,
 To neither title having any claim.
 The money you received from La Vieuville,
 He stripped you of in a most shabby style.
 You could not rest at night whene'er you felt
 That he was near you. Then, his retinue —
 So madly did his vanity break out —
 Was quite as grand and numerous as yours,
 As if he were your equal. Such a clang
 Of swords attended him on his return —
 Do you recall it ? — that the insolent din
 Would make you start up, trembling in the dark,
 Out of your sleep. Yes, you, the King, his king !
 Your house's head ! And all you said was this :
 " There's quite a noise whenever he goes by ! "

[She embraces THE KING, who seems to endure her caresses rather impatiently. His eyes are all the time fixed on THE CARDINAL, as if he wished to derive advice and inspiration from him.]

At last you're king ! And, sire, you should reflect
 In France a foreign yoke is little liked.
 He is Italian.

THE KING.
 And a Spaniard you.

THE QUEEN (*raising her head and wiping away a tear*).
 I pardon you that brutal word, my child,
 By your mouth uttered, by his heart conceived.
 [*She casts an indignant look at MAZARIN*
 He's there, that devil with his mocking smile !
 [*She lets her head fall on her hands and weeps.*
 Oh !

[THE CARDINAL *while playing with a big repeater, which
 he carries under his soutane, makes it strike the hour,
 as if inadvertently.*

THE KING (*to THE QUEEN, coldly*).
 Madame, it grows late.

THE QUEEN.
 'Tis true ; your room
 Is ready ! Let us enter. Come ! Rest sure
 Your welcome will be warm. My women, sire,
 Shall serve you. [*Turning to THE CARDINAL.*] 'Tis my
 right.
 [*Drawing THE KING to her knees.*] My darling Louis !
 You know how formerly —

THE KING.
 I must return
 To Compiègne, for the hour of midnight strikes.
 Villequier will answer for me, and,
 Madame, with deep respect I take my leave.
 [*To MAZARIN.*] Come, sir.

THE QUEEN (*who has her eyes fixed on the ground, and never looks at THE KING*).

Alas !

[MAZARIN approaches the table and takes one of the candelabra. He bends, at the same time, towards the car of THE QUEEN.

THE CARDINAL (*in a low tone to THE QUEEN*).

When free we can explain
Our misconceptions. I'll return at once.

[THE KING kisses the hand of THE QUEEN, bows profoundly, and leaves, preceded by THE CARDINAL, who bears the candelabrum in front of him.

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN alone ; then DAME CLAUDE.

THE QUEEN.

May I be with the dead, before I wait
For thee, thou wretch ! The traitor ! He would snap
His fingers in my face. In sooth !

[*She rings. One of her women, DAME CLAUDE, appears at the door of the corner on the right.*

My bed ?

DAME CLAUDE (*pointing to the room she is coming out of*).
Is ready, madame, there.

THE QUEEN (*musings in front of the stage*).

The King's no more
My son. The court to Mazarin belongs.
If that man placed his foot upon my breast

A moment of silence. The apartment becomes again gloomy and deserted. Suddenly, in the corner on the left, a panel in the wainscot, in no respect different from the others in appearance, turns on itself and shows an entrance which it masked. This entrance appears to open on a little spiral staircase. A man is seen ascending it, in a dress of sombre colour, wrapped in a mantle, with a dark lantern in his hand. It is COUNT JEAN. He enters, leaving the panel behind him open.

SCENE III.

COUNT JEAN, *then* THE MASK *and* ALIX.

COUNT JEAN.

We have got here at last! [*He gazes around him.*
Ten years! What things
Have passed away since then! What tears this room
Then mourning for its mistress, saw me shed!
The very chairs and tables are the same!
But ah! ten years have fled; ten centuries!

¹ Title given to the second son of the King of France during the old régime.

Ill-fated woman ! O ye walls ! my soul
 That veils itself for all,—ye know it well !
 The secret of the evil I have borne
 And of the evil I have wrought is hid
 From every human eye, save mine alone !
 But now is not the time for selfish tears.
 We must be quick.

[*He turns back to the half open panel and leans over the dark staircase.*

This is the place. Come up.

THE MASK (*flinging his cloak and hat on the ground*).

Alix ! I love you ! I am free ! And now
 The world is yours and mine !

[*To COUNT JEAN.*] Oh, rid me of
 This hideous mask !

COUNT JEAN.

At once.

[*He makes a sign to THE MASK to be seated, then draws a file from the haversack and begins filing the padlock of the mask.*

THE MASK.

At last ! at last !

But where are we ?

COUNT JEAN.

We are remote from man
 And close to God. The dead a vigil keep
 Above us, and a sainted, loving shade
 Our guardian is. Your guide is an old soldier.

[*Pointing to ALIX, who after entering has knelt in silence on a prie-Dieu in the corner of the theatre.*

An angel prays for us. Fear nothing.

THE MASK.

Thanks !

COUNT JEAN.

To-morrow we start for the frontier. Then
Two days will take us to Mezière. Our friends
Are arming. Meanwhile we must spend the night
In this deserted castle quietly.

[*While speaking, he has completed the filing of the lock of
the mask, which gives way and at length opens.*

Behold !

[*He takes the mask off the prisoner and lays it on a round
table in one of the angles of the apartment. When
THE PRISONER is freed from the mask he looks for an
instant as if he were made giddy by happiness, and
appears to breathe at ease with immense delight. He
is a fine young man about sixteen years old.*

THE PRISONER.

O God !

ALIX (*surveying him*).

How beautiful he is !

My very dreams have wronged him !

THE PRISONER.

Ah, at last !

The shadow that did fold me in its depths,
The ghastly shadow melts away ! I stand
With head erect, and boldly plunge myself
In air and liberty and light ! All things
Are radiant with brightness. If I could
But clutch them as they flit ! — Alix ! Alix !
Not eyes alone but every feature sees !
Oh, the fresh air ! on every side the air !
It sports amid my locks ! And I can kiss
Thy hand and go wherever I may list !
Can it be true ? Am I indeed myself ?

How pure the night ! Thy smile transports my soul !
 All Nature with her myriad voices speaks
 To all my ravished senses ; and I see !
 I hear, I breathe, I live ! I leave, Alix,
 At last that gloomy cloud, and feel transfigured !

COUNT JEAN (*who has never taken his eyes off THE PRISONER, and who appears sunk in a deep reverie*).

A strange resemblance !

THE PRISONER (*going to the window and opening it impetuously*).

O ye starry skies ! —

Yes, I was dead ! For me the world at length
 Has raised her veil. That mask was hell itself !
 Come hither to this window !

[*He draws ALIX near the casement*

See yon trees ;

How beautiful they are ! And all things smile !
 And all things pierce my soul ! 'T is wondrous strange.

ALIX.

Poor friend !

COUNT JEAN (*thoughtful*).

I see the meaning of the mask !

THE PRISONER (*intoxicating with joy*).

My Alix, we shall fly ! — yes fly together —
 Into some happy land where none know fear,
 Where Nature, child of God, shall be our own !
 The stars shall shine in azure skies as now,
 The woods in welcome bend their heads as now,
 And with their festal murmurs greet our ears ;
 We'll drink in that pure air that cools the blood,
 And love each other !

[He falls on his knees, holding ALIX in his arms.
O almighty God!

We thank thee!

COUNT JEAN (to THE PRISONER).

Come! there is no time to lose.
We must take measures for our safe departure.

TO ALIX.

Come with me. Tagus waits for us below.
And you know, madame, where to find the keys;
We shall return for you.

[He leaves with ALIX by the panel which closes on them.
THE PRISONER, *left alone, fixes his eyes with rapture on the sky.*

THE PRISONER.

Oh, glorious sky!

To-morrow I shall walk beneath thy vault,
Shall boldly walk like others, and shall tread
The highways, as they do who move along
In careless freedom, with no thought that some
Poor captive may regard them as they pass!
O bliss!

[Noise of steps in the gallery at the back. He turns round frightened.

I hear some steps.

[He goes to the door at the back and looks.

No, nothing stirs.

[A faint light appears in the gallery. He fixes a terrified gaze on it.

Who is yon pallid man in crimson shroud?

There is another. He is clad in black.

They come this way! Oh, whither shall I fly?

[He runs to the door by which he has entered and tries to open it, but in vain.

This door? Oh, it is locked!

[*He runs to the door on the right, but also fails.*

And this one too!

[*He hides behind the screen, which he folds up and shuts on himself again.*

Just Heaven!

[*Enter THE CARDINAL accompanied by CHANDENIER, the captain of his gendarmes. CHANDENIER carries a large portfolio shut, in one hand, and in the other a candelabrum. THE CARDINAL, pale, sick, coughing at intervals, and pressing his hand against his breast, leans on the arm of CHANDENIER. His eyes wander round the apartment, and he appears surprised to find no one in it.*

SCENE IV.

THE CARDINAL, CHANDENIER, THE PRISONER, *concealed*.

THE CARDINAL.

Ah! None!

[*To CHANDENIER.*] I run some danger here.

Station a hundred of my body-guard

Around the castle.

THE PRISONER (*half opening the screen*).

Who are these two fiends?

Great God! I'm lost.

THE CARDINAL.

Well, well, her majesty

Has not stayed for me.

CHANDENIER.

Is she much incensed?

THE CARDINAL.

Why does she give herself such useless pain ?

Time was her anger well did suit a queen, —

'T is but the screaming of a woman now.

Stay in that lobby with your lieutenant ;

I shall stay here until the Queen awakes, —

It will not inconvenience me too much

And speak to her I must. Oh, very well !

Place all that 's needed on the table.

[CHANDENIER *places the candelabra and the portfolio on the table.*

Oh !

And by the way, pray, leave your dagger with me.

[CHANDENIER *takes the dagger from his belt and obeys ; then, at a sign from THE CARDINAL he leaves.*

THE CARDINAL (*playing with the dagger, and feeling its point with his finger*).

Who knows ? The adage says that prudence is

The mother of safety.

[*He lays the poniard on the table.*

THE PRISONER (*who has been observing everything with terror*).

Help me, O my God !

[*As soon as CHANDENIER has disappeared, THE CARDINAL takes a little key from his girdle and opens the portfolio, the cover of which has a mirror inside, which is seen when the cover is raised. The portfolio when opened becomes a desk. In one corner there is an ink-stand, in the other a pot of rouge with its accessories. Part of a map is seen hanging from the portfolio. THE CARDINAL unrolls it, examines it for a few minutes, and then rises, coughing.*

THE CARDINAL (*in a reverie*).

Health is a hopeless day-dream; I have all, —
Wealth, power, and honours, — all excepting life!
I feel I'm dying!

Ah! what happy days

I passed when I was but a musketeer,

At twenty-five!

[*He rises and looks in the glass.*

How frightful I do look!

[*He puts some rouge on his cheeks, then falls again into a reverie.*

Can we arrange this marriage? It must fail!

All these affronts must needs disgust the King.

Well, then! we'll take another, — Charles the Second,

A claimant to the English throne; if not,

John, King of Portugal, lord of the seas,

Offers me the Infante through the Pope;

And there again is Conti. We shall see.

'T would be most bitter! Still, in any case,

I am the master; all depends on me!

[*Pressing his hand on his breast.*

I suffer! Ah! [*He coughs.*]

To work! To do great deeds

Is to forget that one must die at last!

[*He unrolls the map and examines it with deep attention.*

No more reverses! France by growing calm

Has calmed the world. And yet the nobles still

Are insolent, the parliaments are jealous.

But I have tamed Bourdeaux, Toulouse, and Rennes, —

And Paris! mighty hyra-headed Paris!

No more wild frenzy! No more desperate strife!

[*He unfolds a letter.*

Now for the offer of the Emperor.

[*Running it over.*

'T is well. He too would smother every spark.

He yields.

[*Gazing on the map.*

We take both Alsace and Brisach.

With the Three Bishopricks, and bide our time
 For Besançon and Brussels. Later on,
 My secret aims shall reach the wished for goal.
 Between the Rhine and Pyrenees can France
 Alone her safety find. A hostile force
 In two or three days' march could Paris reach.
 'T is almost on the frontier; it should be
 The centre of the realm. I will attain
 The ends I aim at without noise or war.

*[He raises his head and gazes on the portrait of CARDINAL
 RICHELIEU.]*

O Richelieu! we shall accomplish each
 A giant task; he made a King — and I
 Am making France.

[Again letting his eyes wander over the map.]
 And yet that is but little.

[He rises.] The edifice I rear is vaster than
 A kingdom and more perfect than a king, —
 A dream that burned my eyes through sleepless nights,
 A fabric, formless yet, at which I toil,
 With painful labour piling stone on stone,
 A mass of rivers, mountains, capes, and seas,
 Which God rough-hewed before he shaped our clay,
 Which, after Philip the Second, Richelieu
 Left as a sacred legacy to me;
 A work I have perfected by a thought,
 Which I complete at length, and which receives
 From me its quickening law. Thou art that work!
 Thou whom I seem to see hang menacing
 Above my head! Thou who dost show thyself
 From out the shadow to my awe-struck gaze!
 O Europe! vault immense that rests on France!

[Returning to the map]

Each moment Germany grows pale, and Spain
 The lesser grows the larger she becomes;

The peace of Munster makes France queen of all.
The lion turns to cat. The Emperor
Caresses us. The North scarce bends the knee
In presence of the Holy Roman Empire ;
Instead thereof she turns her eyes to us.
Alone the Treves elector hesitates
About acceptance of my plans. He is
A priest and old. How get him in my hands ?
Egad ! he is a cadet of the house
Of Deux-Ponts, and we 'll manage him through it !
[*In a reverie.*] A new ambassador, — some valet bribed.
The Sultan is twelve years ; his empire totters.
There is no State but has impending o'er
Its brow some threatening rock. Thus Stockholm brings
To Copenhagen danger. Moscow is
A menace to Warsaw. I've crushed the Swedes.
I hold the Muscovite grand-duke in leash ;
And when he 's dreaming of a new crusade,
I let him send an embassy to Venice.
I watch Turin, — a link that often snaps.
The houses of Farnese, Est, Gonzague
Will die out soon ! A child holds Mantua,
While in Modena a duenna rules ;
I manage both with neither fuss nor flurry.
As for republics, why, my worthy doges
Manipulate them well. The virtues of
These Brutuses become more mild with age.
For me Paoli governs Genoa,
Cornaro, Venice. Glorious country that ! —
The poniard always, but the scaffold never !
As for the little democratic States,
We must, in spite of the diplomatists,
Leave Lubeck to the Germans, and Ragusa
To the Dalmatians, — toys to please these children !
So all goes as I wish, is sure and safe.

[*Musing.*] Scarce two dark specks on this fair azure sky,—
 Madrid which plots, and London which resists ;
 Philip the fatuous and woe-begone,
 And Cromwell, luckiest of madmen. Pshaw !

[*Turning again to the map.*

O Rome ! [*Musing.*]

Thou stoopest 'neath the weight of years !
 Thou speakest, and thou dost not understand ;
 Thou dost not fall, yet bendest in such sort
 That seeing thee our wavering minds do float
 Between the towers of Babel and of Pisa !

[*Raising his head.*

And there are other interests of which
 We must take thought and be the bulwark. France
 Now shines with radiance in all lands. Her eye
 Takes in the world. Happy, strong, and armed,
 She quenches discord as she passes by.
 The Sophi, who had captured Kurdistan,
 Would Candahar tear from the Mogul's grasp,
 And from the Sultan sever Babylon.
 We made him pause. Our merchants take the place
 Once held by Slavie and Armenian traders,
 And sell their wares from Tigris to the Ganges.
 We're masters everywhere. Our soldiers are
 In Hindostan, our Jesuits in China,
 And — surest means of reigning undisturbed —
 We build our warlike engines through the world.
 But I am old, and broken down by years, —
 The envious years, worst rivals of my fame !
 The shadow that I sink in, step by step,
 Reveals a something which may be a tomb.
 Ah, well ! if then that gloomy hour be nigh
 When o'er my bier the voice of God shall cry,
 "What hast thou done ?" I can say in reply :
 "O God ! the waves did beat upon my head !"

When I reached shore the State was tempest tossed;
The spirit of the past and present met,
And in what furious strife, Thou knowst well!
Louis the Eleventh gave to lawlessness
A wound that Francis widened ere he died.
Yet still the giant lived. Even Richelieu
Saw not the close of that grand final conflict.
For all these men, by virtue of a law
That swayed their being to its inmost depths,
Made war. But I make peace throughout the world!"
[*Rising.*] Throughout the world! Ah, what a glorious
thought!
For this most sacred of all works I toil,
Advancing day by day. The King of France
Is in my hands a glorious implement.
I have accomplished all, and stand upon
The pinnacle of greatness! There are neither
Rocks nor hindrances.

• • • • •

ANGELO:
A Tragedy.

To

JOHN ROGERS HERBERT, Esq., R.A.

Corresponding Member of the Institute of France,

AS AN HUMBLE TRIBUTE

TO HIS GREAT GENIUS EVIDENCED

IN

Works of Sublimity and Beauty,

WHICH ARE A LASTING HONOUR

TO THIS

AGE AND COUNTRY,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED

BY

HIS DEVOTED FRIEND AND ADMIRER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANGELO MALIPIERI, PODESTA.

RODOLFO.

HOMODEL.

ANAFESTO-GALEOFA.

TROILO, *an Usher.*

THE DEAN OF ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA.

THE PATRIARCH OF ST. ANTHONY.

A BLACK PAGE.

TWO NIGHT WATCH.

CATARINA BEAGADINI.

LA TISBE.

REGINELLA.

DAFNE.

Venetian Nobles, Visitors, Attendants, Archers, Sbirros, etc.

PADUA, 1549.

ANGELO.

ACT I.

FIRST DAY.

SCENE. — *A garden illuminated for a night fête. On the right the Podesta's palace brilliantly lighted and whence proceed the sounds of music, having an entrance on the garden and an arcaded gallery on the ground floor where visitors are seen moving to and fro. Near the entrance a stone bench. On the left another bench, on which, in shadow, may be seen HOMODEI lying asleep. In the background, above the level of the trees, are perceived the grey outlines of Padua, of the sixteenth century, against a clear night sky. Towards the end of the act the dawn appears.*

SCENE I.

LA TISBE, *in a rich ball costume. ANGELO MALIPIERI, ducal robe and vestments, with scarf of gold. HOMODEI, asleep; long robe of brown wool, closed in front, red breeches; a guitar by his side.*

LA TISBE.

True, you are master here, master of all;
The great Podesta and unquestion'd lord
Of life and death, embodied power and will,
Imposed upon us by the queenlike Venice,
That all on every side, who dare to gaze,
May recognize in you the sombre presence,
Weight, form, and majesty of the Republic.
Parade our streets and every casement closes,

The passers-by skulk off, the households tremble,
And our poor Paduans with ill-graced visage
Look cowed and crestfallen as the slavish Moslem
Before his sultan's frown. Well, such is Padua ;
But visit Brescia, and the scene is changed.
Even Venice dare not trample upon Brescia ;
She dare not strike. Let her but raise her hand,
Brescia will bite, while Padua only licks it.
Oh, 't is disgrace, 't is shame ! Well, then, my lord,
Though you be master here, master of all, —
Even, as you think, of me, — yet hear my voice ;
Nay, have no fear. You 'll hear the truth ; but not
On the Republic, — on affairs of State.
No ; on your own affairs ! You are a man
So strangely formed, I understand you not ;
You love *me*, yet are jealous of your wife.

ANGELO.

Jealous of you, too, madame.

LA TISBE.

Holy saints !

You have no need to tell me that ; and yet
You have no rights o'er me. I am not yours.
I'm called your mistress, your all-powerful mistress, —
But you know well I am not.

ANGELO.

Your night fête
In splendour, madame, surpasses all I've seen.

LA TISBE.

I'm but a poor comedian of the theatre
Whom you permit to offer to grave senators
These festivals, that you may be amused, —

And with at best but poor success ; your face
Is far more sombre than my mask is black.
My prodigality of lamps and torches
Fails to remove the shadow. What in music
You gain is scarcely render'd back in pleasure.
Do try and laugh for once.

ANGELO.

Yes, I will laugh.

Did you not tell me the young man who came
To Padua with you was your brother ?

LA TISBE.

Yes ;

What follows ?

ANGELO.

You just lately spoke to him.

Who was the other that companioned him ?

LA TISBE.

His friend ; one Anafesto-Galeofa,
New from Vicenza.

ANGELO.

How is your brother named ?

LA TISBE.

Rodolfo, my good lord, Rodolfo. Twenty times
Have I already told you. Can you not
Find livelier subjects to discourse upon ?

ANGELO.

Pardon ; I'll trouble you no more with questions.
Know you, last night you played "La Rosamonda"
With wondrous grace ? Oh, happy Padua,

Envied of all in thus possessing you,
 The admiration of all Italy !
 To hear the mob applauding you torments me ;
 To see your beauty common to all gazers.
 No one but I should look upon you, Tisbe ! —
 Tell me, who was the man in mask to whom
 You spoke this evening, standing near the portal ?

LA TISBE (*smiling*).

“ Pardon, Tisbe ! I ’ll ask you no more questions.
 Who was the man ? ” Ha, ha ! — The man, my lord,
 Was Tasca — Virgilio Tasca.

ANGELO.

My lieutenant ?

LA TISBE.

My lord, your sbirro.

ANGELO.

What sought *you* from him ?

LA TISBE.

You would be nicely caught if I refused
 To tell.

ANGELO.

Tisbe !

LA TISBE.

Nay, nay, I will be docile ;
 Here is the history. You know that I,
 Comedian, child of the people, — something
 To be caressed to-day despised to-morrow,
 As it may please my masters, — even I,
 Low as I may have been, had once a mother.
 Great lord, have you had one ? Knew you what ’t was
 To be a child, a poor child, weak and famished,

Naked and miserable in the world,
And feel that you had near you and around you,
Ay, and above you, walking when you walked,
When you stopped, stopping, smiling when you smiled,
A woman? No, the child knows not that 't is
Even a woman. 'T is an angel that
Looks down and smiles; from whom we learn to speak,
From whom we learn to sing, to laugh, to love;
Who warms us with her warmth, who near her heart
Enfolds our feeble form, feeds with her milk,
Bestows her health, her life; whom we call *mother*,
Who calls us *child*,—sweet sounds that angels hear
With tears of joy — Well *I* had such a mother!
Poor soul, she sang, here and in Brescia,
Morlachian songs in th' open squares for bread.
I roamed with her; that was my life. One day, —
'T was by the statue of Gattā-Melāta, —
Chanting these rhymes she little understood,
Some jests which they contained, aimed at the Council,
Made her plebeian audience chuckle, but
Gave dire offence to a Venetian noble,
Who, turning to his suite, with smother'd wrath,
Said calmly, "To the gallows with that woman!"
In Venice 't is as quickly done as that.
They bound her hands; she spoke no word. What use?
She pressed me to her bosom; a hot tear
Fell on my cheek; then, crucifix in hand,
She looked to heaven. The cord was round her throat!
Before me ever is that crucifix
Of burnished copper, my name "Tisbe" carved
Roughly upon the base; young was I then.
I saw these people manacle my mother,
I screamed not, spoke not, could not even weep:
Marble, ice-cold, I stood; nor thought, nor feeling!
'T was like a dream! The crowd was silent, too.

With the Venetian was a gentle maiden,
This noble's daughter, who held him by the hand,
The sweetest child! who, moved to instant pity,
Fell at her father's feet, her eyes like rivers,
And with imploring lip, beseeching heart,
And urgent wooing, won my mother's pardon.
Once free, she placed, in gratitude, her cross
Within that pitying angel's hand, and said:
"Preserve this crucifix; and trust my word,
Should evil days arrive, 't will bring good fortune."
My mother's dead: her home is with the blessed!
Her grateful promise is my heart's first duty.
No longer poor, I live on the one thought
To meet again the child who saved my mother.
Grown woman now, she must be now unhappy;
Each town I enter, I seek out forthwith
Some spy, Bargello, or official agent;
I tell my story and invoke his aid.
And unto him who may succeed I promise
Ten thousand golden sequins as reward.
And now, my lord, you know why at the portal
This afternoon I was in converse with
Your trusted sbirro, or we'll say lieutenant,
Virgilio Tasca. Have I answered you?

ANGELO.

Ten thousand sequins for the finding her!
What will you give this woman when she's found?

LA TISBE.

My life, if it will serve her.

ANGELO.

By what means
Hope you to find her?

LA TISBE.

My mother's crucifix.

ANGELO.

The which she will have lost or parted with.

LA TISBE.

We lose not that which with our heart we 've gained.

ANGELO.

Look, madame, there 's a man ! Why lies he there ?
Who is he, Tisbe ?

LA TISBE.

True, a man lies yonder
In a sound sleep. Do not torment yourself
On his account. 'Tis my poor Homodei.

ANGELO.

What Homodei ? Who is this Homodei ?

LA TISBE.

This Homodei, my lord, is, as you see,
A man, — much as this Tisbe is a woman ;
A guitar player, on behalf of whom
My excellent good friend, his reverend lordship
The Primicerio of St. Mark, addressed
To me a letter, which shall be duly laid
Before your jealous eyes ; and with the missive
There came a gift.

ANGELO.

Indeed !

LA TISBE.

Indeed, my lord ;
A true Venetian present, — a quaint casket,

Containing two small phials, one white, one black :
A powerful narcotic in the one
Inducing for twelve hours the soundest sleep
Resembling death ; a poison in the other, —
Such a sure deadly draught as Malaspina
Doctor'd the Pope with in a pill of aloes.
The reverend Primicerio says I might
Upon occasion find a use for it.
(Most delicate attention !) And then adds,
That he who brings his present is an idiot.
My lord, you must have seen him the last fortnight
Playing and singing, taking food, or sleeping
Under the sky as now. He came from Venice,
And goes hence to Vicenza. (So my mother
Was used to wander !) While he wills to stay
I'll keep him here. This fate does not amuse him,
And so he sleeps. That is his history.

ANGELO.

You answer for this man ?

LA TISBE.

You make me laugh.
A guitar player, an idiot, and a dreamer, —
And the man scares you ! Ah, my dear Podesta,
What's your disease, that thus you pass your life
In questioning this, that, and everything ?
Say, is it jealousy or fear ?

ANGELO.

'T is one and both.

LA TISBE.

Your jealousy I comprehend, — you watch
And guard two women. As for fear, you are
The master here, where all hold *you* in dread.

ANGELO.

And therefore must I fear. As you suggest,
I am all-powerful here, tyrant, — Podesta,
The sov'reign lord and despot of this town,
The tiger's fang upon the helpless sheep.
But, look you, Tisbe, although absolute,
Above my head, grand, dark, and terrible,
Looms Venice! What is Venice? I will tell you.
'T is the State Inquisition. 'T is the Council
Of Ten, Tisbe! Let's whisper low that word;
For close around spies may be watching us, —
Men whom we know not, yet who know us well;
Seen no where, and yet hovering round our scaffolds,
Our heads within their grasp, — yours, mine, the Doge's;
With to the eye, no cognizable mark;
A mystic sign alone beneath their garment.
No robe, no scarf, no cap of office there,
To show this man or this is one of them.
Agents, spies, headsmen, compass you around,
With direful visage, like those heads of bronze
In fatal Venice, seeming mute as death,
Yet speaking with a voice so hard and terrible,
To all who pass, "Denounce." Once you're denounced,
You're seized; once seized, the end is not far off.
In Venice, all is secret, hidden, sure;
Judged, executed. Look, nor word, nor cry
Is possible. The victim gagged and bandaged,
The headsman masked. I spoke just now of scaffolds,
But I was wrong. You die not so in Venice;
You disappear. Missed from the bosom of
Your family, — where must we seek? Nay, ask
The secret wells; ask the canal Orfano.
Night and the silent grave alone know all!
Hark! a dull sound is heard upon the waters;
Pass quickly, nor inquire. As for the rest,

Venice means balls and fêtes, music, and lights,
And gondolas, and mirth, and theatres, Tisbe, —
That one, the only side *you* know of Venice,
Pleasure! As senator, *I* know the other.
Trust me, in every palace — mine, the Doge's, —
There wind dark tortuous passages, that hear
All the intimate gossip of saloons and chambers;
Lobbies, whose secret panel doorways move
To an undreamt strangers touch, one who, we feel,
Glides like a serpent round about our hearth.
In foul, mysterious caverns 'neath our feet
Evil men come and go, and do strange deeds;
Oft blending private vengeance with their craft.
Night after night I raise me in my bed,
Startled, as footsteps pass within the walls.
Such is my life! and yet I may crush Padua.
Podesta, on condition I am despot!
Have you a foe? Speak, and he's punished; but
Plead not to me for any living soul.
I am your slave: I can refuse you nought;
But it would be my ruin! I may not pardon.
Tyrant of Padua, I am the tool of Venice!
You guess not the surveillance of that city.
Employ a workman on a secret lock
Down in your deepest cell; before 't is finished
The Council have the key safe in their pocket.
Madame, my very valet spies upon me;
My dearest friend's a spy; my confessor,
In Heaven's name a spy; and she who vows
She loves me, — loves me, Tisbe, — even she
Betrays me to the Ten.

LA TISBE.

Oh, my good lord!

ANGELO.

I do not speak of you, — you never yet
Told me you loved me ; yet do I repeat :
All that looks on me is the eye of Venice ;
All round that hears me is the ear of Venice ;
Whatever touches me, the hand of Venice,
That deftly feels and feels till it can crush !
Magnifico, Podesta, — that I am !
Who may to-morrow in my private chamber
Hear some official sbirro whisper, “ Follow ! ”
Nought but a wretched spy — yet I shall follow.
Where ? To some vault profound, whence he alone
Will issue without me ! To be of Venice
Is to hang by a thread o’er an abyss,
To bend over a furnace at white heat, —
My furnace Padua ! — With visage masked,
Doing the work of tyrant ’gainst my will ;
Around me hopes and terrors, fears, precautions ;
Misdoubting at each sound some dread explosion,
Or trembling lest I may be laid a corse,
Like the Alchemist, by my own deadly compounds !
Feel for me then, but ask not why I fear !

LA TISBE.

God knows I feel for you.

ANGELO.

Yes, I ’m the tool
Whereby one people doth enslave another ;
Tools that are quickly used and quickly broken !
In all my misery, one thing alone
In this world offer’d me the hope of peace, —
Your love, dear Tisbe ! Yet you love me not.
Tell me, at least, you do not love another.

LA TISBE.

On that point be you calm.

ANGELO.

You answer me

With reservation.

LA TISBE.

I answer as I may.

ANGELO.

Refuse me your heart's love, I am content,
So that no other — If I thought another —

LA TISBE.

If, when you look like that, you think you're handsome,
You're much deceived.

ANGELO.

When will you love me, Tisbe?

LA TISBE.

When all around you love you.

ANGELO.

Then, alas!

Yet you must not quit Padua. Stay at Padua.
Dost hear me, Tisbe? If you fly, my life
Will fly with you. But see, they're coming to us.
They've seen us long together, talking here;
Suspicion might be bred of that in Venice.
I leave you.

[*Pausing and pointing to HOMODEL*
You will answer for this man?

LA TISBE.

As for a sleeping child.

ANGELO.

Farewell, dear Tisbe.

I trust you with your brother.

[Exit ANGELO.]

SCENE II.

LA TISBE; RODOLFO, *dressed simply, and in black, with a black plume in his hat*; HOMODEI, *still sleeping*.

LA TISBE.

With Rodolfo!

Rodolfo whom I love! No, servile tyrant;

[Turning to where ANGELO went out.]

Blind bat! he's not my brother, but my lover.

Come then, my banish'd hero, noble exile,

My generous loved one, look me in the face!

Thou art brave and handsome, and I love thee!

RODOLFO.

Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Yet, why didst come to Padua? Do you see

We are tangled in the snare, and cannot fly;

While you, forced to deceit, must act my brother!

I tremble day and night lest this Podesta,

Holding us in a leash he will not slip,

And with his foolish passion for thy Tisbe,

Discover all. The torture of that thought!

But fear not; he will nothing gain from me.

You're sure of that Rodolfo, are you not?

Yet I would not that you felt too secure;

For I would have thee anxious, jealous of me,

Doubting, yet confident.

RODOLFO.

My charming Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Jealous as I am, — to the finger-tips ;
 Not like this Angelo, who thinks he 's jealous, —
 This man, this Malipieri, who believes
 He loves, yet mingles with his love all sorts
 Of other foolish fears and mad suspicions ;
 As if one could see spies, or cells, or scaffolds,
 When jealous ! No, there is but one thing then
 The lover's eye *can* see, — his jealousy.
 Well then with me, Rodolfo, so it is.
 Smile or address a word to other women,
 You ache my heart. What right have they to thee ?
 Rival ! Give me no rival. I will take
 Her life. Thou art the only man, Rodolfo,
 I ever loved. Dark was my heav'n till now ;
 'Tis now bright glory. Thou'rt my orb of light,
 Thy love th' effulgent east of rising day.
 Other men chilled me ; thou hast given me life.
 Why were we strangers all these years gone by ?
 All corners of my heart that have been dead
 Will now revive. What joy this power to be
 An instant with you, to converse with you !
 But, oh ! the folly of it. — here in Padua,
 Living thus in restraint. Dear, loved Rodolfo ! —
 [Speaking off as if to ANGELO.]
 Yes, he's my lover ; yes, my lord, — my brother !
 It makes me mad with joy thus to talk freely
 And at my ease with you. Am I not mad ?
 I know you think me mad. Tell me you love me.

RODOLFO.

Who could help loving you ?

LA TISBE.

Say that again,

Coldly like that, I shall be angry with you.

Love me, oh, God! Love me! Yet must I hence,

Must show myself; I cannot linger here.

But tell me Rodolf, why so sad a look.

You are not now unhappy?

RODOLFO.

No, dear Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

You are not suffering?

RODOLFO.

No.

LA TISBE.

You are not jealous?

RODOLFO.

No.

LA TISBE.

But you must be jealous, sir, or else

You love me not. Look not so sad. Fear you,

Like me? Each nerve within me trembles;

And yet there's no one knows you're not my brother.

RODOLFO.

No one but Anafesto.

LA TISBE.

He's your friend.

[Enter ANAFESTO-GALEOFA.]

And at the moment here he comes. I'll trust

You in his care. Promise, good Anafesto,

You will not let him speak to any woman
While I 'm away. [*Smiling.*]

ANAFESTO.

Your wish shall be obeyed.

[*LA TISBE goes out.*]

SCENE III.

RODOLFO ; ANAFESTO-GALEOFA ; HOMODEI, *still asleep.*

ANAFESTO (*looking after her*).

Oh, charming siren ! Happy man ! She loves you.

RODOLFO.

I am not happy, friend. I love not her.

ANAFESTO.

What's that you say ?

RODOLFO.

Who is this man who sleeps ?

ANAFESTO.

Only the poor musician.

RODOLFO.

Ah, the Idiot —

ANAFESTO.

You love not Tisbe ? Can what you say be true ?

RODOLFO.

Did I say that ? Forget it.

ANAFESTO.

Why, she's charming!

RODOLFO.

True, she is charming; yet I love her not.

ANAFESTO.

Explain.

RODOLFO.

You must not ask me.

ANAFESTO.

I, your friend!

LA TISBE (*re-entering and running to RODOLFO smiling*).

See, I am back; only to say one word,

A private word, — I love you. Now I'm gone.

[LA TISBE *runs off*.]ANAFESTO (*looking at her as she leaves*).

Alas, poor Tisbe!

RODOLFO.

Deep within my heart

A secret lies which I have told to no one.

ANAFESTO.

The day you think me most your friend you'll tell me.

To-day you're over sad.

RODOLFO.

Leave me a while.

ANAFESTO *goes out*. RODOLFO *seats himself on the bench near the door, his head sunk in his hands*. HOMODEI *then opens his eyes, rises, and slowly moves towards RODOLFO standing erect behind him*.

SCENE IV.

RODOLFO, HOMODEL. HOMODEL *places his hand on the shoulder of RODOLFO, who turns and looks at him in amazement.*

HOMODEL.

Your name is Ezzelino da Romano ;
You know 't is not Rodolfo. You 're the scion
Of an ancient family who reigned in Padua,
Were banished by the State two centuries back.
But now unknown, wandering from town to town
Under feigned names, even on Venetian soil,
You often risk your life. 'T is just seven years
That in the streets of Venice you were seen.
One day, — 'twas in a church (that of St. George), —
Attracted by the charms of a sweet girl
You knelt beside her, your whole soul absorbed !
Mass o'er, you followed not. 'T was wise ; for that
Would have been almost certain death in Venice.
Thenceforth your visits to the church were constant ;
So were the lady's. Mutual love arose,
Yet knew you not her name, — have never known ;
To you she passed as Catarina merely.
You found the means to write, she to reply ;
A rendezvous was fixed, — 't was with a saint !
A holy maid, Cecilia the blessed !
Your lives were pure ; your loves as deep and maddening
As ever loves could be, remaining pure.
The girl was noble ; that was all you knew.
A noble of Venice can only, by the law,
Wed a Venetian noble or a king.
You 're not Venetian, you 're no longer king ;
And as a banished man, debarr'd all claim —
One day you missed her at the rendezvous,

And from the sanctified Cecilia learnt
That she was married. You were never told
Her husband's name, more than you knew her father's.
You turned your back on Venice. From that day
You've roamed all Italy in search of her ;
You've tried distraction, pleasure, folly, vice,
Without effect. You've tried again to love ;
Thought sometimes to succeed, as with this actress,
But still in vain. The one love conquer'd all !
In this town now you pass for Tisbe's brother.
The great Podesta, Angelo Malipieri,
Is seized with a deep passion for this Tisbe.
But what *to you* has chanced in Padua, where
You live a life within a life ? — I'll tell you.
One evening, 't was in February last,
On the Molino bridge, a female veiled
Passed by your side, and took you by the hand,
Leading you to the Strada San Piero ;
There stand the ruins of the ancient palace
Destroyed by the third reigning Ezzelino,
Your ancestor, — the Palace Magaruffi.
Within those ruins you were shown a hovel ;
Within that hovel, what ? — your Catarina !
Whom you still love, and who for seven years
Has loved you truly. Well, from that day forth
Three times a week you met, and yet in spite
Of passion and temptation, she remains
Faithful both to her love and to her honour, —
Ay, faithful to her husband as to you.
Last month your happiness received a check ;
She came not to the hovel. For five weeks
She has been lost to you. 'T was that her husband
Began to doubt her, and she's close encaged.
But see, 't is dawn ; daylight will soon appear.
You'll search, but will not find ; you'll never find her.

RODOLFO.

Dead!

HOMODEL.

What if *I* could show you her to-night!

RODOLFO.

Who are you?

HOMODEL.

One who answers to no questions. —
So then you would not care to visit her?

RODOLFO.

Not care! Oh, were the heavens to fall, I'd see her
Though 't were one moment, and I died the next!

HOMODEL.

Then you shall see her.

RODOLFO.

Where?

HOMODEL.

At her own home.

RODOLFO.

But tell me then, who is she? What her name?

HOMODEL.

When there, you'll know

RODOLFO.

Then Heaven has sent you to me!

HOMODEL

I cannot tell. — To-night when the moon rises,
Or simpler still, at midnight, let me find you
By the Palazzo Alberto di Baon
Midnight, remember!

RODOLFO

And you will not tell me
By what name I may know you?

HOMODEI.

By what name?

The Idiot!

[HOMODEI goes out

RODOLFO (*alone*).

Who's this man? What is't to me?

Midnight! 'T is long till then Oh, Catarina!
To be with thee! Well, I'll not fail; for 't is
A joy too cheaply purchased with my life.

SCENE V.

RODOLFO, LA TISBE.

LA TISBE.

You see I'm here again. Good-day, Rodolfo!
I could delay no longer I follow thee
About,—away from thee I cannot live;
I see and feel through thee; I am the shadow
Of thy dear body, thou the soul of mine.

RODOLFO.

Beware! Mine is a fated family.
A curse hangs o'er us, Tisbe; a destiny
Which most inexorably ever has been —
Must be fulfilled. Those who love us — we kill.

LA TISBE.

Love me then first, and you shall kill me after.

ANGELO.

RODOLFO.

Tisbe !

LA TISBE.

Then weep for me. I ask no more.

RODOLFO.

Tisbe, you're worthy of an angel's love.

[RODOLFO *kisses her hand and leaves her.*

LA TISBE.

And so he leaves me ; rushes out of sight !

What is his grief ?

[*Looks at bench.*

Ah ! Homodei awake ?

[HOMODEI *appears at back of stage.*

 SCENE VI.

LA TISBE, HOMODEI.

HOMODEI.

Rodolfo's name, in truth, is Ezzelino.

The homeless outcast is a prince ; the Idiot

A shrewd observer, sleeping a cat's sleep, —

Eye closed, ear open.

LA TISBE.

What says he ?

HOMODEI.

Look here.

Guitars have cords responding to our touch :

So of man's heart and woman's, they have strings

That one can play upon.

LA TISBE.

What can this mean?

HOMODEL.

Madame, it means that if by accident
You miss a handsome youth with sable plume,
It may be I can guess the happy chamber
Where he will pass the night.

LA TISBE.

Not with a woman?

HOMODEL.

Fair as Diana!

LA TISBE.

Nay, 't is false! Who are you?

HOMODEL.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

You are not what you seem'd.
Unhappy me! Then the Podesta's doubts
Were based on truth! Thou art some fearful man.
Whence come you? Rodolf, say you, closeted
This very night, in parley with a woman?
Is that what you would say?

HOMODEL.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

Then what you say is false. Rodolfo loves me.

HOMODEL.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

Ah, miserable wretch,
Your tongue is false! Oh, God, how false!

You are a spy, — a vile suborned spy !
Have I then enemies ? Yet Rodolf loves me ;
You cannot frighten me about his love ;
I trust you not. It maddens you, I see,
To find your evil words have no effect.

HOMODEL.

You have observed, no doubt, that the Podesta
Upon his chain of gold wears a small trinket
Artistically wrought ; it is a key.
Ask him to give 't you as an ornament.
Say you desire it ; give no other reason.

LA TISBE.

A key, dost say ? No, I'll not ask it of him.
I'll ask for nothing. You would make me doubt
Rodolfo's honour. You are infamous.
I will not have the key ; I will not hear you.

HOMODEL.

See ! the Podesta comes. When you've the key,
I'll tell you how, to-night, 't will serve you well.
Farewell ! I shall return.

LA TISBE.

Oh, wretched knave,
You will not understand ! I'll have no key.
I trust Rodolfo and — I will not have it ;
Nor will I say a word to the Podesta.
So trouble me no more ; 't is useless. I
Do not believe you.

HOMODEL.

I'll be quickly back.

[*He goes out. Enter ANGELO.*]

SCENE VII.

LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

Once more, my lord, you're here. Whom do you seek?

ANGELO.

'T was with Virgilio Tasca I would speak.

LA TISBE.

Are you still jealous?

ANGELO.

Still, and always, madame.

LA TISBE.

Jealous! Wherefore? I do not understand
This jealousy; 't is folly. Just assume
I loved a man, — think you I should be jealous?

ANGELO.

You do not love then.

LA TISBE.

Yes — *some one*, I love.

ANGELO.

Whom?

LA TISBE.

You.

ANGELO.

You love me? 'T is impossible!
You would but trifle with me. Yet, oh, Heaven!
Repeat what you have said.

LA TISBE.

I say I love you.

[He approaches her with delight; she receives him in a fondling way, plays with his chain, etc.]

What is this little gem? I ne'er before
 Remarked its workmanship; and jewell'd too!
 By Benvenuto this must have been chisell'd!
 'Tis lovely! far more fitting for a lady
 Than for a man.

ANGELO.

Tisbe, you've filled my heart
 With joy to overflowing with one word.

LA TISBE.

May be; yet you'll not tell me what I ask.
 What is this trinket?

ANGELO.

This? Why 't is a key.

LA TISBE.

Fancy! A key! I never could have guess'd
 It was a key. Ah, now I look — And will
 It open things? A real, real key?

ANGELO.

A real key, Tisbe.

LA TISBE.

Why, if that is all
 I do not care to have it. You may keep it.

ANGELO.

What! Were you coveting this foolish trifle?

LA TISBE.

Because I thought it was an ornament;
 Such lovely workmanship!

ANGELO.

Then take it, pray.

LA TISBE.

No. Had I known it was a key! — I tell you I do not want it. 'Tis of use to you.

ANGELO.

Oh, rarely; and besides I have another.
I swear 't will pleasure me if you will take it.

LA TISBE.

No, no; the fancy's gone. You really open Doors with this little key? 'Tis very small!

ANGELO.

Such keys as these are made for hidden locks.
'T will open many doors, — among them, Tisbe,
The chamber where I sleep.

LA TISBE.

Your room, Podesta !
Well, since you press it on me, I will take it.
[*She takes the key.*]

ANGELO.

Oh, thanks, and double thanks! Tisbe, at length
You have accepted something at my hands.

LA TISBE.

Ah, now I recollect, the Ambassador
Of France at Venice had a thing like this.
Say, did you know the Marshal de Montluc ?
But I forgot, you Senators of Venice
May have no converse with ambassadors ;
And I must say he was not over gentle.

The Huguenots who fell within his power
Were never spared by Monsieur de Montluc.
Stay ; if I'm not deceived, my lord, there is
Virgilio Tasca, whom you seek, down near
The gallery

ANGELO.

Indeed !

LA TISBE.

Do you not want him ?

ANGELO.

Yes ; but why come upon me at this moment ?

LA TISBE.

There, to the right.

ANGELO (*kissing her hand*).Ah, Tisbe, you *do* love me ?

LA TISBE.

There, there, you'll lose him. He awaits you, see !

[ANGELO *goes out*. HOMODEI *enters*. TISBE *goes to him*.]

SCENE VIII.

LA TISBE, HOMODEI.

LA TISBE.

I have the key.

HOMODEI.

Show me. Yes, that is it.

In this lord's palace is a gallery
Which looks on the Molino Bridge ; hide there

To-night, behind the hangings — where you will —
I'll seek you there at two hours after midnight.

LA TISBE.

I'll pay you well. Meanwhile, accept this purse.

HOMODEI.

Yes ; but pray hear me out. When I arrive
I'll point out the first door that you must open.
That service done, I leave you ; without me
You can do all the rest, — walk straight before you.

LA TISBE.

What shall I find after the first door open'd ?

HOMODEI.

A second. Use your key.

LA TISBE.

After the second ?

HOMODEI.

A third. That key will open all.

LA TISBE.

And what

After the third ?

HOMODEI.

After the third, you 'll see !

ACT II.

SECOND DAY.

SCENE. — *A chamber richly hung in scarlet trimmed with gold. In an angle to the left, a magnificent bedstead on a raised dais, and surmounted by a canopy supported upon twisted columns. From the four corners of the canopy hang crimson curtains which can be closed so as entirely to hide the bed. In an angle on the right, an open window; on the same side a door concealed or masked by tapestry hangings; near it a prie-dieu, above which, and suspended against the wall, hangs a crucifix of burnished copper. At the end of the chamber, large folding doors. Between the folding doors and the bed, another small door very much ornamented. Tables, easy chairs, sconces with candles, a grand wardrobe. Outside may be seen gardens, steeples, the moon shining. Books, etc., on the table.*

SCENE I.

DAFNE, REGINELLA, *afterwards* HOMODEI.

REGINELLA.

Dafne, 't is certain. Troilo, the night usher,
Told it me all. 'T was lately — the last time
My lady went to Venice — it occurred.
Some police spy dared to declare his love,
To write to her, to seek her very presence,
Till forced with ignominy from the palace.

DAFNE (*opening the door near the prie-dieu*).

How shocking, Reginella! But my lady
Is waiting for her missal.

REGINELLA (*arranging books on table*).

And the sequel
Was yet more terrible, and quite as true.

Poor Palinuro, who simply told his master
He 'd met this spy in the house, died suddenly
That very night, of poison ! So you see
We must be prudent here and guard our tongues,
Or else the walls may hear.

DAFNE.

Then let me go.
We 'll talk some other time My lady waits.

REGINELLA (*still arranging books, eyes on table*).

If you 're impatient, go then, and I 'll follow.

[DAFNE *goes out and closes the door without* REGINELLA
being aware of it.

I would advise you to keep perfect silence
Within these palace walls. The only room
Where one is safe is this. Here we can say
Just what we like, certain that when we speak
No one can overhear.

[*The wardrobe fixed in the wall turns round, allowing*
HOMODEI *to pass in without being perceived ; it then*
recloses.

HOMODEI.

Here we can say
Just what we like, certain that when we speak
No one can overhear.

REGINELLA.

Good heavens !

HOMODEI.

Silence !

[*Opens his robe and shows his black velvet pourpoint, with*
the letter C.D.X. embroidered in silver. REGINELLA
looks in terror.

And learn from me, if any one by word
Or sign divulge the secret presence here
Of one of us, he dies ere close of day ;
You know 't is so.

REGINELLA.

Good Lord ! By what door came he
In here ?

HOMODEI.

By none. Answer my questions truly :
Your life depends on it. Where leads this door ?

REGINELLA.

To my lord's bedchamber.

HOMODEI.

And this one ?

REGINELLA.

That !

The private staircase to the galleries,
Of which my lord himself keeps the sole key.

HOMODEI.

And this again ?

REGINELLA.

My lady's oratory.

HOMODEI.

Is there an issue from that oratory ?

REGINELLA.

None. 'T is the tower, with casement iron-barr'd.

HOMODEI (*going to window*).

About the height of this ? Twenty-four feet
Of straight descent, the Brenta at the base.

Bars needless. Is there not a staircase from
The oratory? Whither doth it lead?

REGINELLA.

To Dafne's chamber and to mine, my lord.

HOMODEI.

Any outlet from that chamber?

REGINELLA.

None, my lord;
Again an iron-barr'd window, but no door.

HOMODEI.

Well, when your mistress enters, you'll at once
Go to your room, and neither speak nor listen.
Dost hear?

REGINELLA.

I will obey.

HOMODEI.

Where is thy mistress?

REGINELLA.

In the oratory, kneeling and in prayer.

HOMODEI.

After which she'll come here?

REGINELLA.

She will, my lord.

HOMODEI.

But not for half an hour?

REGINELLA.

No, my lord.

HOMODEI.

'Tis well. Leave me, and silence. With what happens
 You've nought to do. A cat plays with a mouse;
 'Tis not your business. You have never seen me;
 I do not even exist. You understand?
 Speak but a word, I hear it. Let your eye
 Give sign, I see't; a pressure of the hand,
 A gesture, and I know it. Now depart.

REGINELLA (*half aside*).

O Lord above! who is 't must die to-night?

HOMODEI.

You, if you speak.

[*At a sign from HOMODEI she goes out by the door near the
 prie-dieu. HOMODEI then approaches the wardrobe,
 which turns again and shows a dark passage.*

Now, signor, you may enter.

Nine steps to mount. Come in.

 SCENE II.
HOMODEI; RODOLFO, *wrapped in a mantle*.

RODOLFO.

Where am I, say?

HOMODEI.

Perhaps upon the platform of your scaffold.

RODOLFO.

What mean you ?

HOMODEL.

Has it never yet been told you ?

In Padua is a formidable chamber,
Bright with gay flowers and perfumes, perhaps with love,
Yet where no man whatever, young or old,
Peasant or prince, dare penetrate ; of which,
Even to touch the handle of a door,
Were crime punished with death.

RODOLFO.

I've heard ; — you mean

The chamber of the wife of the Podesta.

HOMODEL.

The same.

RODOLFO.

Well, and that chamber ?

HOMODEL.

You are in it.

RODOLFO.

What ! In *her* chamber ?

HOMODEL.

Ay.

RODOLFO.

Then she I love —

HOMODEL.

Is Catarina Bragadini, wife
To Malipieri, Padua's Podesta !

RODOLFO.

Is 't possible! The wife of the Podesta!

HOMODEL.

If you feel terror — go. The door is open;
You yet may fly.

RODOLFO.

Fear for myself? No; but
For her I love. How know I, I may trust you?

HOMODEL.

I'll tell you how. 'Tis now eight days ago,
When late at night you passed across the square
Of San Prodocimo; you were alone.
You heard a noise, cries, and the click of swords,
Close by the church; you hasten'd —

RODOLFO.

Yes, and rescued
From the hands of three assassins, a masked man.

HOMODEL.

The man left you without a word of thanks. —
That mask'd man was myself; well, since that night
I have wish'd well to the Lord Ezzelino.
You know me not. I know you, and have labour'd
To bring you near the woman whom you love;
'Tis gratitude, no more. Now will you trust me?

RODOLFO.

Yes, thanks; implicitly. I own I feared
Some treachery towards her. I felt a weight
Upon my heart; 't is gone. You are my friend.
You have, for me, done more than I for you.

Apart from her I could no longer live ;
I should have died or done some damned act.
'Tis not my life alone, 'tis heart and soul
Thou 'st saved.

HOMODEL.

So you determine to remain ?

RODOLFO.

Remain ! I 'm here ; and I have said I trust you.
To see her once again, an hour, a minute !
'Tis strange to you, this craving of the heart ?
Where is she ?

HOMODEL.

Praying in her oratory.

RODOLFO.

Where shall I see her ?

HOMODEL.

Here.

RODOLFO.

When ?

HOMODEL.

In ten minutes

RODOLFO.

Oh, God ! The joy !

HOMODEL.

Yet listen. At that end
Is the Podesta's chamber. There he sleeps
Even now. Excepting us, and your Catarina,
There's no one now awake within the palace.
I think to-night you're safe. As for the entrance
Which served our turn, that secret must be mine ;

Save *me*, 't is known to none ; but at the dawn
 You can escape with ease. There lies the husband.

[*Pointing to the door.*]

As for *you*, Lord Rodolfo, *you* the lover,
 I would advise you not to use this window ;
 You see the height, — and down below the river.

[*Looking down.*]

I leave you.

RODOLFO.

In ten minutes, did you say ?

HOMODEL.

Yes.

RODOLFO.

Will she come alone ?

HOMODEL.

Possibly not ;

Stand you aside at first.

RODOLFO.

Where ?

HOMODEL.

Here, behind

This bed ; — or, stay, the balcony. Come forth
 When you judge proper. Hear you that ? The chairs
 Are being moved within the oratory.
 Your Catarina comes ; I must depart.

RODOLFO.

Whoe'er you be, henceforth you may dispose
 Of me and mine, my wealth, my strength, my life.

[*RODOLFO disappears on balcony.*]

HOMODEI (*coming forward*).

Lord Ezzelino, she will ne'er be thine.

[*He watches to see if he is observed, then takes from his breast a letter which he places on the table, then goes through the secret passage, which he closes after him.*
CATARINA and DAFNE enter from the oratory. CATARINA in the costume of a lady of rank.

SCENE III.

CATARINA ; DAFNE ; RODOLFO, *hidden*.

CATARINA.

More than a month, Dafne, — more than a month !
All then is ended ! Oh, could I but sleep
And see him in my dreams ! — I cannot sleep.
Say, where is Reginella ?

DAFNE.

In her chamber,
Sleeping or praying. Shall I send for her,
That she may wait on you ?

CATARINA.

No. Let her wait
On God, and pray. Useless seem prayers to me !

DAFNE.

Would you I closed this window, madame ?

CATARINA.

Dafne,
You little know my sufferings ; now five weeks,

Five lingering weeks, since I set eyes on him.—
 No, do not close that window. My head burns;
 It cools my brow.— I ne'er shall see him more!
 Guarded! Shut in! A prisoner! All is finished.
 To seek me here were death! I would not see him.
 I fear lest he should make some mad attempt.
 God! was it then so great a sin to love him?
 Why ever came he here to Padua?
 Why did I yield to a false happiness
 So quickly ended? Oh, what joy was it,
 From time to time to see him for an hour, —
 That hour so short, 't was ended ere begun.
 Yet 't was the only loophole whence to glean
 The little air and sun that gave me life.
 That glorious presence which brought day to me,
 Is gone forever! Dafne, tell me truly,
 Dost think I ne'er shall see that face again?

DAFNE.

Madame!

CATARINA.

I know I 'm unlike other women;
 Little I care for pleasures or distractions.
 For seven years I've lived upon one thought,
 My heart upon one feeling, — love; one name, —
 Rodolfo! If I look within, what see I?
 Rodolfo! Nothing but Rodolfo there!
 I am made in his image, — only his;
 The mirror of my soul reflects no other.
 It had been otherwise impossible,
 This life of mine! Seven years. I was young then!
 How without pity do they marry us!
 My husband! Do I dare to speak to him?
 Is that a happy life, a true position?
 Alas! Had I a mother!

DAFNE.

Pray, dear madame,
Leave these sad thoughts.

CATARINA.

Dafne, on nights like this
What sweet hours have we passed! And is it wrong
To think and say these things? It cannot be.
Yet if my griefs afflict you, leave me, Dafne;
Go and take rest, and send me Reginella.

DAFNE.

But Madame will require —

CATARINA.

No, I'll undress
Alone. Get thee to bed, good Dafne, and sleep well.

DAFNE.

May th' angels, madame, watch o'er you to-night.
[DAFNE leaves by the oratory door.

SCENE IV.

CATARINA; RODOLFO *on balcony.*CATARINA (*in a reverie*).

That song he used to sing, lying at my feet, —
I'd give my life to see him there once more,
To hear again those words that stirred my soul.
[Takes her guitar.

This was the air, I think.

[She plays some bars of melancholy music.

As for the words !
 Oh, I would pawn my soul to hear him sing them,
 Even if I saw him not ; ay, far away,
 So I could catch his voice, — that thrilling voice !

RODOLFO (*from balcony, sings as follows*).

My soul unto thy heart is given :
 In mystic fold do they entwine ;
 So bound in one, that were they riven
 Apart, my soul would life resign.
 Thou art my song, and I the lyre ;
 Thou art the breeze, and I the briar ;
 The altar I, and thou the fire ;
 Mine the deep love, the beauty thine !

CATARINA (*letting fall her guitar*).

Heaven !

RODOLFO (*continues*).

As fleets away
 The rapid hour
 While weeping, may
 My sorrowing lay
 Touch thee, sweet flower.

CATARINA.

Rodolf !

[RODOLFO *appears from balcony, and throws off his mantle*

RODOLFO.

Catarina !

CATARINA.

Can it be ?
 You in this room ! I die with joy and fear !
 Oh, guess you where you are ? Do you not know
 This chamber you dare enter is like no other ?
 No, loved Rodolfo ; here you risk your head !

RODOLFO.

What matter, when I know that without you
I must have died. 'T is happier to die here.

CATARINA.

Then you 've done well; yes, you were right to come
I see you, and we can but die together.
One hour with thee, then let the earth fall on us.

RODOLFO.

God may protect us; all is here asleep.
Since thus I 've entered, cannot I go forth?

CATARINA.

And how *was* that?

RODOLFO.

'T was one whose life I had saved
I can't explain it, — but the means are sure.

CATARINA.

Oh, in such case, if all be sure, Rodolfo,
I am content. But let me look upon thee.

RODOLFO.

And on thee, Catarina!

CATARINA.

We 'll not dream

Of any but ourselves; I 'll think of you,
While you — Ah! true, I 'm changed; *why*, you well
know.

For five long weeks I have done nought but weep!
And how with thee? Hast thou been very sad?
Hast felt this parting deeply? Tell me, love;
I long to hear thee speak.

RODOLFO.

Oh, Catarina!

To look and not to see thee, 't was as though
 Mine eyes were seared, my heart an aching void;
 'T was daily to feel dying inch by inch;
 'T was as a dreary dungeon without lamp;
 A starless night; a sleep that nothing dreamt
 Nor thought nor knew! What have I done, you ask?
 I cannot tell; what I felt — now you know.

CATARINA.

And so with me, — and so with me; ay, Rodolf,
 So has it been with me, — our hearts as one.
 What have I not to tell! but where begin?
 I am in prison here; I cannot stir.
 Thou must not wonder that I did not leap
 And hang upon thy neck, and smother thee
 At the first moment, — it bewilder'd me!
 And when I heard thy voice, 't was as if heaven
 Had open'd, — that I knew not where I was!
 Now sit thee in thy place, as formerly, —
 Only speak low. You'll stay here till the dawn;
 Dafne will let you out. What luscious hours
 Are those whose flavour takes away all fear!
 Thy presence strengthens, gives seraphic joy!
 'Twixt thee and Paradise, I should choose thee!
 Thank Dafne for her care of me, and ask her
 How I have wept; thank Reginella too.
 But tell me first, how learnt you who I am?
 Yet nothing baffles you. You will a thing,
 And dare th' impossible to compass it!
 Have you safe means of entering here again?

RODOLFO.

Could I live otherwise? Oh, Catarina!
 As I drink in your words, they are like honey,

Fear nothing! See how calm and bright the night!
 Within us love, and all around repose;
 Two souls expanding in each other's warmth
 With sympathetic growth. A love so pure
 Bright angels would not trouble. I love thee,
 Thou lovest me, and Heaven above keeps watch;
 All else is sleeping! What, then, should we fear?

CATARINA

True, there are states in which no fear can live. —
 All to each other! Parting is *our* death;
 We dread none else! For what am I, alone?
 A poor chained woman; thou, a banish'd man!
 United, we may make the angels envy.
 Yet, no; in heaven they're not like us, Rodolfo. —
 Could mortals die of joy, we now were dead!
 How my head rambles; I've said a thousand things,
 Yet cannot I recall a word I've uttered;
 Can *you* remember? Is't not all a dream?
 And are we really here?

RODOLFO.

Dear, happy saint!

CATARINA.

Now, do not speak; let me collect my thoughts.
 Let me regard thee silently, my love,
 And dream that thou art there. Then will I talk.
 Yes, there are moments thus, when we would look, —
 Look at the man we love, and say, "Be silent;
 I'm feeding on you, — silence! I'm loving you;
 Be silent still; I'm happy!"
 [*He kisses her hand; she turns, and sees the letter lying on
 the table.*]

What is this?

Oh, God! A paper! It alarms me, Rodolf!
Awakes me from my dream! — Rodolfo, say,
Placed you that letter there?

RODOLFO.

No; but the man,
Perhaps, who came with me —

CATARINA.

Came there a man
With you? What man? What can this letter mean?
[*She opens letter hurriedly, and reads.*
“Some weak-brained men get drunk on Cyprus wine;
Some revel more in vengeance. A poor spy
In love is puny; in revenge he’s great!”

RODOLFO.

Good heaven! What can that mean?

CATARINA.

I know the hand.
The wretch who dared to raise his eyes to me,
To tell me that he loved; to force his way,
In Venice, to my home; who was thrust forth!
His name is Homodei.

RODOLFO.

The fiend!

CATARINA.

A trusted
Spy to the Council of Ten.

RODOLFO.

That fearful Council!

CATARINA.

Caught in the toils and taken! We are lost!

[She goes to balcony and looks out.

See there!

RODOLFO.

What is 't?

CATARINA.

Blow out the sconces quickly!

RODOLFO (*extinguishing the lights*).

What have you seen?

CATARINA.

The gallery by the Molino bridge!

RODOLFO.

Well?

CATARINA.

Lights that shine, then disappear, then shine.

RODOLFO.

Weak fool that I have been! Oh, Catarina,
'T is I have caused thy death!

CATARINA.

Dearest Rodolfo,

I should have come to you as you to me.

[Listening at little door at the end

Hark! Hear you not sounds in the corridor!

A door is opened; now the tread of feet;

How got you in, Rodolfo?

RODOLFO.

By a masked entrance

That demon has reclosed.

CATARINA.

How act ?

RODOLFO.

That door ?

CATARINA.

Leads to my husband's room.

RODOLFO.

The window then ?

CATARINA.

'T is an abyss !

RODOLFO.

This door ?

CATARINA.

My oratory !

Whence there is no escape, no hope of flight ;

Yet enter it. I'll double lock the door.

[*Opens door ; RODOLFO enters. She closes and locks the door, takes the key and hides it in her breast.*]

Who knows what may arise ? He might rush out

To give me aid, and would himself be murder'd.

[*She goes to small door at the end.*]

Now I hear nothing. Yes, they move again ;

They stop, — to listen, doubtless. Oh, my God !

There is no other course but to feign sleep.

[*Takes off her outer robe, and throws herself on the bed.*]

I tremble like a leaf. Now in the lock

A key is turned ! I dare not see who enters.

[*Closes bed-curtains. The door opens*]

SCENE V.

CATARINA, LA TISBE.

[LA TISBE enters. *She is very pale, a lamp in her hand. She moves with cautious steps, looking around her ; reaches the table, examines the candles which have been extinguished.*

LA TISBE.

The light but just blown out !

[*Turns and sees the bed, hastens to it and draws the curtain aside.*

She is alone !

That sleep's pretence !

[*She makes the tour of the room, examines doors and walls.*

This is the husband's door.

[*She then strikes against the oratory door, which is concealed by the tapestry.*

Another door here too !

[CATARINA raises herself in the bed and observes TISBE, with a feeling of stupefaction.

CATARINA.

What can this mean ?

LA TISBE.

What can it mean ? I'll tell you. 'T is the mistress
Of the Podesta, who holds within her grasp
That same Podesta's wife.

CATARINA.

Oh, Heaven !

LA TISBE.

It means

That a comedian, a child of the stage,
 A *beladine*, as you great dames miscall her,
 Holds at her mercy a grandee of Venice,
 A married virtue, a respected wife, —
 Holds tight within her claws, within her teeth,
 This spotless fame, to do with 't as she wills;
 This golden reputation to tear piecemeal,
 Gnaw it in shreds, and cast it to the winds!
 Ha! ha! Proud madame, I know not all may happen,
 But this I know, for this is sure, — I hold
 One of this pamper'd race beneath my foot,
 To trample on at pleasure; nor will I
 Loose that firm hold; and be you well assured
 It had been better for you had Heav'n's thunder
 Crash'd o'er your head than to have seen my visage.
 You're brave to dare to raise your eyes to mine,
 The while your smuggled lover watches us.

CATARINA.

Madame!

LA TISBE.

Ay, smuggled!

CATARINA.

You have been deceived.

LA TISBE.

I'm not deceived by you! 'T was there he sat, —
 Your places are declared by those two seats.
 Had you been shrewd, you would have shifted them.
 What might those chairs disclose of plighted fondness,
 Of passionate clingsings; tender, glowing vows!
 "I love thee! Worship thee! I'm thine, alone!"
 Nay, come not near me!

CATARINA.

What would you imply?

LA TISBE.

Imply? This: that your worth's no more than ours;
That what we say aloud in open day,
You whisper shamelessly in th' ear of night.
The hour alone is changed. We take your husbands,
You rob us of our lovers ' 'T is a challenge;
Then clear th' arena. Let us see who wins.
You things of forms, shams, and hypocrisies,
Soiled virtues, tinsel, traitors to your homes —
Worth more! By Heaven, you are not worth our value!
We deceive none; 't is you who cheat the world,
Cozen your husbands, blind your families,
And if you could, would circumvent th' Almighty!
See these veiled virtues, sweeping through the streets,
To seek the church, bend, cross themselves, and pray, —
Mummers! Nor bend, nor pray, nor cross yourselves;
Tear off the veil, — behind it is a mask;
Tear off the mask, and what behind? Lying lips!
Now hear the truth: I'm the Podesta's mistress,
You are his wife! On one must ruin fall!

CATARINA.

Oh, God! you would —

LA TISBE.

Where is *he*?

CATARINA.

Who?

LA TISBE.

This man.

CATARINA.

I am alone here, madame, as you see.
 I do not understand your menaces ;
 I know you not, and yet you chill my heart. —
 Curdle my blood with terror. Against you,
 What have I done ? In this, what purpose have you ?

LA TISBE.

You ask my purpose ? Be you sure I have one.
 You virtuous wives may well excite our wonder !
 Should I be here, did not rage tear my vitals ?
 What is 't to me that you are the grand lady,
 And I the actress ? Does 't make my beauty less ?
 I have no need for envy, but I hate you !
 Hate you, and scorn you, from my inmost heart !
 Where is this man ? His name ? Let him stand forth
 And meet my gaze whilst you affect to sleep, —
 Ay, as you did but now, infamous trickster !

CATARINA.

O God ! My God ! Where must this end ? Oh, Heaven
 Oh, madame, if you knew —

LA TISBE.

What I know is,
 Behind this hidden door *he* hears our words.

CATARINA.

That is no other than my oratory ;
 Believe me, there is nobody concealed.
 Some one has cheated you, and slander'd me.
 See, here I live retired and isolated.

LA TISBE.

The veil !

CATARINA.

You'll only find my breviary,
My prie-dieu there within.

LA TISBE.

The mask!

CATARINA.

Will you

Not credit me, if I declare to you
No one is hidden there?

LA TISBE.

The lying lips!

CATARINA.

Hear me!

LA TISBE.

Why, you must be distraught to assume
This pitiful air of guiltiness and fear;
Either speak truth or lie with more assurance.
Courage! Rise up against me, show your anger,
Defend indignantly your innocence!

*[Suddenly she sees the mantle near the balcony, runs, and
snatches it up.]*

But that's no longer possible! Behold!

CATARINA.

Oh, heavens!

LA TISBE.

What's this? 'Tis surely not a mantle?
Not a man's mantle? But unhappily,
I cannot tell to whom it may belong,
One is so like another. Be truthful, madame,
And give me the man's name.

CATARINA.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

That is your oratory ; open it.

CATARINA.

Wherefore ?

LA TISBE

I wish to pray as well as you.

Open it.

CATARINA.

I have no key.

LA TISBE.

Open, I say !

CATARINA.

I know not where it is.

LA TISBE.

Your husband, then !

Angelo ! Signor Angelo ! My lord !

[TISBE runs to the door at the end ; CATARINA throws herself
before to stop her.

CATARINA.

You shall not enter there. I will not have it.
What have I done to you ? What is your thought
'Gainst me ? Have pity ! Why would you injure me ?
One moment, — I'll explain ; you shall know all.
One moment only ! Since you have been here,
I am unsettled, frighten'd by your words ;
My mind is troubled and my brain confused.

You say you're a comedian, I a lady, —
 What more? I swear to you there is no one there.
 What of that sbirro? You speak not of him,
 And yet I know he is the cause of all.
 You must have seen him, talked with him, — that man
 Of mystery and crime, who lives by cheating.
 Would you believe a spy? One instant, listen!
 Women are not so hard on one another;
 A man I do not say would be so kind.
 Have mercy! You're too lovely to be cruel!
 'Tis as I said, — that wicked man, that spy —
 Would you not suffer if you caused my death?
 My husband — Do not wake him; he is hard;
 Kill me, he would. Oh, knew you my position,
 You'd pity me; I am not culpable,
 Not really culpable, — indeed I am not.
 I may have been imprudent, — nothing more.
 What mother's guidance have I ever had?
 Oh, pity me, and go not to that door,
 I pray, — I do beseech!

LA TISBE.

All words are useless.
 Nothing will bend me. Quick! My lord! my lord!

CATARINA.

Nay, pause! You know I've told you he will kill me.
 Leave me the time to pray. Oh, my God! Hear me!
 I will not quit this room; see, I will kneel,
 Here, — here, before this crucifix, — for mercy.
 [*Pointing to crucifix of copper above the prie-dieu.*]

TISBE'S *eyes fix themselves on the crucifix.*
 Kneel here and pray with me. Then if you wish
 My death, if God still leaves that dreadful thought
 Within your heart, then do your will upon me.

LA TISBE.

[Rushing to crucifix, and tearing it from the wall.]
 What is this crucifix? Where got you it?
 How came it here? Speak, speak! Who gave it you?

CATARINA.

That crucifix? Do you not see I'm crush'd?
 Why with perplexing questions trouble me?

LA TISBE.

How comes this crucifix in your possession?
 Speak quickly! Will you never answer me?

[The candle is still alight near the balcony.] TISBE *ap-*
proaches it and examines the crucifix. CATARINA
follows.

CATARINA.

That cross? 'T was an old woman; there's a name,
 You see, upon the base, — "Tisbe," I think.
 'T was a poor woman whom they would have hung;
 I pleaded for her life, — begged to my father;
 He granted it. 'T was here in Padua;
 I then was but a child! Oh, pity, madame;
 Let me not die. That woman gave it me.
 She said 't would bring me happiness. — That's all.
 There was no more, — I swear there was no more.
 What evil in all that? Why question me?
 See, I'm exhausted unto death!

LA TISBE.

Loved mother!

How strange all this!

[The door at the end opens. ANGELO appears in a dressing-
gown, or night-robe.]

CATARINA.

My husband! Then I'm lost!

SCENE VI.

CATARINA, LA TISBE, ANGELO.

ANGELO (*without seeing TISBE, who remains near balcony*).

What mean these voices that I hear?

CATARINA.

My lord!

ANGELO.

How is't you are not sleeping at this hour?

CATARINA.

'T is that —

ANGELO.

Why trembling thus? There's some one with you.

LA TISBE.

There is, my lord; 't is I.

ANGELO.

You, Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

I.

ANGELO.

You here, and in the middle of the night!

Why here? Why at this hour? And my wife —

LA TISBE.

In trepidation. I will tell you; listen!

The matter's worthy your attentive ear.

CATARINA.

All's ended! Death glares at me!

LA TISBE.

In two words,
You were to have been murder'd in the morning.

ANGELO.

Murder'd!

LA TISBE.

While passing hence unto my palace;
You know your practice is to go alone.
The news reached me but now; and in all haste
I sought your wife, that she by some device
Might hold you safe indoors. Now you know why
I came at night, and why your wife is trembling.

CATARINA.

Great God! What is this woman's purpose, then?

ANGELO.

I cannot feel surprise. Now you perceive
I had good reason when I spoke of dangers;
They're ever round me. But whence came the caution?

LA TISBE.

From one who, ere he told me, made me promise
He should not be detained. I kept my word.

ANGELO.

'T was wrong. Such promises are never kept.
How enter'd you the palace?

LA TISBE.

Again this stranger.
At the Molino bridge a little door
Was open'd by him, and admitted me.

ANGELO.

'Tis as I told you. And to reach this room ?

LA TISBE.

I used the key you yourself gave ; 't is here.

ANGELO.

How knew you that it open'd to this chamber ?

LA TISBE.

You told me so yourself.

ANGELO.

Whose is this mantle ?

LA TISBE.

The man had placed it on me for disguise,
Ent'ring the palace. He gave me, too, a hat ;
I must have let it fall.

ANGELO.

That men can enter
These walls without my knowledge ! That is the life
I'm doom'd to lead, — one corner of my robe
Ever in these men's grasp ! Now tell me, Tisbe —

LA TISBE.

My lord, leave further question till to-morrow,
I pray you. For the nonce, we have saved your life, —
Madame and I, — yet not one word of thanks !

ANGELO.

Your pardon, Tisbe.

LA TISBE.

Below, my litter waits me ;
Escort me, pray. Let your wife take her rest.

ANGELO.

I'm at your orders, Tisbe. We will pass
Through my apartment; I would take my sword.
[*Going to large door.*]
Holla! Lights there!

LA TISBE (*taking CATARINA apart*).

Let him escape at once!
The door by which I enter'd! Take this key.
[*Gives her the key, and then turns to the oratory.*]
Oh, could I force that door! The pangs I suffer!
My doubts still unresolved!

ANGELO.

I await you, madame.

LA TISBE.

Could I but see him pass! There are no means.
And I must leave, tortured, unsatisfied!
My lord, your hand.

[ANGELO and LA TISBE go out.]

CATARINA.

Oh, God! Is this a dream?

[CATARINA falls down exhausted.]

ACT III.

THIRD DAY. — PART I.

SCENE. — CATARINA'S chamber as before. *The curtains surrounding the bed are closed.*

SCENE I.

ANGELO, THE DEAN, *and* THE PATRIARCH of ST. ANTONIO.

ANGELO (*to the DEAN*).

Most reverend dean of St. Antonio
Of Padua, forthwith you'll drape the nave,
Choir, and high altar of your church with black,
And in two hours — two hours — you will perform
A solemn service for the soul's repose
Of one of lofty birth, who at that moment
Will have expired. Uncovered let the shrine
Be of your patron saint. You will assist
With all the chapter at this solemn service;
You'll light three hundred candles of white wax,
As is the custom for a royal queen.
Six hundred of the poor you will assemble,
Each to receive a silver ducat and
A golden sequin. On the sable hangings
Be placed no ornament, beyond the arms
Of Malipieri and of Bragadini.
The Malipieri blazonry you know;
The escutcheon *or*, bearing the eagle's talon.
The Bragadini scutcheon bears, per pale,
Azure and *argent*, charged with a cross *gules*.

DEAN.

Magnifico Podesta !

ANGELO.

Now forthwith

You will, with all your clergy, cross and banner
Paraded at their head, descend below,
Into this palace crypt, where lie the tombs
Of the Romano princes. You will find
One slab removed, where a new grave is dug ;
Bless that grave. Be not tardy. Pray for me.

DEAN.

It should be then one of your lordship's blood ?

ANGELO.

Enough !

[*The DEAN bows profoundly, and goes out by the bottom door ; the PATRIARCH prepares to follow.*]

ANGELO (*stopping him*).

Stay, Reverend Patriarch. Within
That oratory is one you must confess.

PATRIARCH.

A man condemned, my lord ?

ANGELO.

No, Priest, — a woman.

PATRIARCH.

Whom you would have me now prepare for death ?

ANGELO.

Yes ; I will bring you to her.

USHER (*entering*).

Your Excellence

Has asked for Donna Tisbe. She is here.

ANGELO.

Let her come in and wait me in this chamber.

[*The USHER goes out. The PODESTA opens the oratory and signs to the PATRIARCH to enter; upon the threshold he stops.*

Now, Patriarch, as you would value life,
On leaving this, remember, none must learn
The name of her you are about to see.

[*ANGELO enters the oratory with the PATRIARCH. The door at the end opens and the USHER introduces*
LA TISBE.

LA TISBE (*to the USHER*).

Know you what he would with me?

USHER.

No, madame.

[*He goes out.*

SCENE II.

LA TISBE (*alone*).

Again this chamber! What can be his object?

An air of mystery pervades the palace.

It matters not. I would give my life to know

The secret hidden last night by that door.

How strange it looks by day. The *man* was there!

What man? Who was *there* hidden? Was it *he*?

Can I be sure? The spy has disappeared.

Oh, this uncertainty! The direful phantom

That troubles thus my rest ; that glares at me
 With dubious look, neither of smile nor frown !
 Oh, were I sure it was Rodolfo, — sure,
 With full proof, — I would crush, denounce, destroy him !
 No, I would not ; I'd have revenge on her.
 No, I would kill myself. Once sure Rodolfo
 Deceived me, loved me not, — nay, loved another, —
 What then were life to me ? Nought ! I would die.
 What ! without vengeance ? And why not ? Ah me !
 I say that now ; but had I the clear proof,
 I might be capable of amplest vengeance !
 Can I say what would stir within my soul ?
 Once it were proved that — last night — Rodolf — Oh,
 Preserve me, Heaven, from what my rage might do !
 Rodolfo — Catarina — side by side !
 Demons ! How should I act ? Whom should I kill ?
 Them — or — myself ? I know not.

[ANGELO *re-enters*.

SCENE III.

LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

You sent for me ?

ANGELO.

Yes ; I must tell you all without reserve.
 Grave matters, Tisbe. As I told you once,
 Each day a treason, every hour a snare,
 A poniard to avert, or axe to wield !
 In two words : It is proved she has a lover !

LA TISBE.

Who's named —

ANGELO.

Who was here yesternight, when we
Were here.

LA TISBE.

Who's named —

ANGELO.

Thus was the thing discovered :
A man, — the Venice Council's spy (and you
Should know, these spies aposted by the Ten,
Hold, with respect to all who are Podestas.
A singular position. They're forbidden,
On penalty of death, to write to us,
Or to hold converse with us, till the day
When it may be their duty to arrest us), —
One of these spies was poniarded this morning
Near the Altina bridge ; on the stream's bank
The night-watch found his body, and removed it.
Was it a duel or an ambush ? None
Can say. The dying sbirro could but utter
Two or three feeble words ere he expired.
'Tis pity that he died ; for when attacked,
He managed to conceal about his person
An intercepted letter, which the night-watch,
Upon his bidding, brought me. 'T was a letter
Address'd to Catarina — by a lover !

LA TISBE.

Who's named —

ANGELO.

The letter was not signed. You ask
His name ? That is the point that troubles me.
The dying man told the night-watch the name.
The fools have not remember'd, nor can they
Agree even in their guesses ; for one says
'T is Roderigo, t' other 't is Pandolfo.

LA TISBE.

Have you the letter?

ANGELO.

'T was to show you that,
 I sent for you. You'll tell me if perchance
 You recognize the hand. [*Draws forth the letter.*]

LA TISBE.

Be quick! Oh, give it!

ANGELO (*in his excitement crushing the letter in his hands*).

You understand how this disturbs my mind.
 This man has dared to raise his eyes upon
 A Malipieri's wife; has dared to stain,
 Upon its brightest page, the Golden Book
 Of Venice, that where *my* name is inscribed, —
 The name of Malipieri. This past night
 The man was in this chamber, standing, say,
 Where I now stand, — the wretch who wrote this letter!
 And yet I know not how to seize this man.
 I cannot swoop my vengeance down upon him
 For this affront; I cannot make him shed
 His heart's blood on the floor he has defiled.
 Oh, I would offer up my father's sword,
 This good right hand, ten years of my own life,
 To know where he exists!

LA TISBE.

Give me the letter.

ANGELO.

Take it.

[*Allows her to take it from him.*]LA TISBE (*aside*).

It is Rodolfo!

ANGELO.

Know you the hand?

LA TISBE.

Give me but time.

[*Reads.*] "My dearest Catarina,
You see, my well-belov'd, how God protects us.
Saved from your husband by a miracle,
And from that woman —"

[*Apart.*] What! that *woman*, eh?
"How, Catarina, I adore thee! Thou 'rt
The only being whom I ever loved.
Fear nothing; I 'm in safety."

ANGELO.

Do you know

The writing?

LA TISBE.

No, my lord.

ANGELO.

You know it not?

What say you of the writer? He cannot be
One just arrived in Padua? 'Tis the tone
Of an old love. I'll search in every hole
And corner of the town, but I will find
This man. Say, what advise you, Tisbe?

LA TISBE.

Search.

ANGELO.

I've order given that save yourself and brother
No one may freely enter in the palace;
All others will be seized and brought before me;
Myself will question them Meanwhile I hold

One half my vengeance safe within my grasp,
And I will glut it.

LA TISBE.

How ?

ANGELO.

My wife shall die.

LA TISBE.

Your wife !

ANGELO.

All is prepared ; within an hour
Catarina Bragadini 'll be beheaded,
As it behooves.

LA TISBE.

Beheaded !

ANGELO.

In this chamber.

LA TISBE.

Good God ! Beheaded ! In this chamber !

ANGELO.

Listen !

My bed, once desecrate, becomes a tomb.
It is decreed this woman dies. 'T was settled
Too calmly to admit of a reversal, —
No passion in 't, to be subdued by prayers ;
No intercession of a friend could change me.
Had I such friend, he 'd be my friend no more.
I hate this woman, Tisbe. If I married,
'T was that my uncle, Bishop of Castello,
For reasons that in families hold good,
Commanded it, and my affairs were urgent.
A wife who wore a face that ever chilled me,

Who never bore me offspring — But enough !
 Hatred is in our blood, in our traditions.
 That day the lion of St. Mark shall fly
 From off his column, hate may plume her wings
 Of bronze and leave the heart of Malipieri.
 My grandsire hated the great Marquis Azzo,
 And in the wells of Venice plunged his foe ;
 My father hated Procurator Badoer,
 And poison'd him at Queen Cornaro's festal.
She is my hatred ; yet I had not harmed her
 Had she been innocent. 'Tis her own affair ;
 She will be punish'd. Pardon for my wife !
 No ! Could my mother's bones rise from their grave
 And plead for her, those bones would plead in vain.

LA TISBE.

And will the gracious Signory of Venice
 Allow this ?

ANGELO.

All to punish, nought for pardon.

LA TISBE.

But your wife's family, — the Bragadini ?

ANGELO.

Will give me thanks.

LA TISBE.

Then all is said ; she dies !

You may be just, — yet pause ; for all so far
 Is secret, and no name declared. Could not
 A hideous punishment — a blood-stain on
 Your palace — now be spared, with public rumours
 And witnesses ? A headsman is a witness,
 And one too many.

ANGELO.

Poison would be better, —
Swift poison! I have none. Think you that strange?

LA TISBE.

I have some.

ANGELO.

Where? What poison?

LA TISBE.

The Malaspina.

You know the casket sent me from St Mark's?

ANGELO.

The one you told me of? Rapid and sure
The poison it contained. Yes, you are right.
We'll call none in to help; that will be best.
Tisbe, my confidence is fixed in you.
What I am forced to do is just and legal;
It is my honour that I would avenge.
Yet 't is a dark and dangerous step I take;
I have no friend but you, — I trust none else.
'T is alike best for her and me to be
Secret and prompt in this. Of you I've need;
May I rely upon your help?

LA TISBE.

You may.

ANGELO.

No one must know how she has disappeared,
Nor why. Grave dug, dirge chanted; but for whom?
No one can tell. The night-watch who are here
Will bear away the corse and bury it;
A cloud must rest o'er all. Send for the poison.

LA TISBE.

None else can find it; I must go myself.

ANGELO.

Go! I'll await you.

[TISBE goes out.

It is better thus.

Darkness and mystery waited on the crime;

'Tis right they should attend the expiation.

[*The door of the oratory opens. The PATRIARCH enters with lowered eyes, his arms crossed on his breast, passes along the chamber slowly. At the moment he is leaving by the door at the end, ANGELO turns towards him.*

She is prepared?

PATRIARCH.

She is, my lord.

[*He goes out; CATARINA appears at door of oratory.*

SCENE IV.

ANGELO, CATARINA.

CATARINA.

Prepared!

For what?

ANGELO.

For death.

CATARINA.

For death! Then this is true

No, 't is impossible! I'll not admit

Such thought a moment. Die! I'm *not* prepared;

I tell you I am not prepared, my lord.

ANGELO.

What time do you desire for preparation ?

CATARINA.

I cannot tell. A life — abiding years !

ANGELO.

Do you want courage, madame ?

CATARINA.

Die at once —

Like that ! I, who have nothing done that merits
Death. Oh, my lord, *one day* ! — no, not *one day*
For I shall be no more prepared than now.
Give me my life ! The cloister ! Surely then
It will be possible to leave me life.

ANGELO.

Well, I will grant you life on one condition ;
I've told you what.

CATARINA.

Indeed ! I have forgotten.

ANGELO.

Who wrote this letter ? Tell me ! Name the man !

CATARINA.

Oh, God !

ANGELO.

Deliver up this man, and you
Shall live. For him the scaffold, and for you
The convent. Say, does that suffice ? Decide.

CATARINA.

Oh, Heaven !

ANGELO.

You answer not ?

CATARINA.

Yes ; yes, I answer.

Oh, Heaven !

ANGELO.

Decide at once.

CATARINA.

Oh, I am so cold !

That chapel ! All, all through me, — oh, so cold !

ANGELO.

Listen. I would be patient with you, madame ;
You have an hour before you, — one short hour
To meditate. No one will enter here ;
Reflect. I leave that letter on the table ;
Beneath, you 'll write *his* name, and you are saved.
Catarina Bragadini, they are lips
Of marble that now speak. You must there write
Your lover's name — or die. You have the choice.

CATARINA.

Oh, but one day !

ANGELO.

One hour !

[*He goes out.*]

SCENE V.

CATARINA (*alone ; she goes to door*).

He locks the door !

[*She goes to window.*

This casement ?

[*Looks out.*

Fearful depth ! Oh, gracious God !

[*She falls into chair.*

The thought of death is very terrible,

Coming like this, without a moment's pause

Or hint ; so sudden, — one hour of existence !

No more ! It is not till these hideous things

Come bodily within our own full life,

We know the horror of them ! My very limbs

Seem crushed ; scarce can I sit. My bed were better.

[*She rises from the chair.*

Oh, could I get one moment of repose,

One short relief !

[*Goes to the bed, withdraws the curtain, and starts with horror. In the place of the bed is a block covered with black cloth, and lying upon it an axe. She screams.*

Oh ! What new horror's this !

[*Closes the curtains with a convulsive movement.*

I cannot look on it ! My God ! Oh, Heaven !

'Tis meant for me — and I'm alone with that !

[*She drags herself to the arm-chair.*

It is behind me there ! I dare not turn !

Oh, Grace above ! I know 't is not a dream.

'Tis very real, all that is planned around me.

And *there* the fatal sign, behind the curtain !

[*The small door at the end opens, and RODOLFO enters*



Catarina finding the Block and Axe

Original etching by Francois Flameng





SCENE VI.

CATARINA, RODOLFO.

CATARINA.

Good Heaven! Rodolf!

RODOLFO (*hastening to her*).

Yes, I'm here, Catarina,
One instant. You're alone? What happiness!
But you are pale, and with an air thus troubled—

CATARINA.

Troubled! Of course. Imprudent that you are
To enter here under the light of day!

RODOLFO.

'T was my unrest. I could hold out no longer.

CATARINA.

Restless? And why?

RODOLFO.

I'll tell you, Catarina,
My well beloved. I am indeed happy
To find you here thus tranquil and alone.

CATARINA.

How did you enter?

RODOLFO.

You gave the key yourself.

CATARINA.

v. But how got you within the palace?

RODOLFO.

That is precisely what disquiets me.
I entered in too easily ; but fear
I shall not leave with equal readiness.

CATARINA.

How so ?

RODOLFO.

The Captain of the Guard assured me
No one could leave the palace before night.

CATARINA.

None before night ! No escape possible !

RODOLFO.

Sbirros are posted throughout every passage ;
'T is guarded like a prison. By great chance
I gained the gallery, and here I am.
You swear to me that nothing then has happened ?

CATARINA.

No, nothing ; be assured Rodolfo, — nothing ;
All is as usual. Look around, there's nought
Disturbed within this chamber. But now leave me.
I tremble lest my husband find you here.

RODOLFO.

Be not alarmed, for at the present moment
Your husband is on the Molino bridge,
Questioning those arrested. Catarina,
I have been greatly troubled ; for the palace
Does not look stranger than the town itself.
Bands of Venetian archers fill the streets.
I tried to reach the church ; 't is draped in black ;
The Office for the Dead was being chanted, —
Yet no one knows for whom ! Who can it be ?

CATARINA.

I know not.

RODOLFO.

And the town seems struck with stupor
Men talk in groups and whisper ; all portends
Some secret and some terrible disaster !
It is not here at least, and I am happy ;
These rumours reach you not in your seclusion ?

CATARINA.

Oh, no !

RODOLFO.

What care I then ? Are you recovered
After last night's alarm ? 'T was an event
I cannot understand. But Homodei
Will trouble you no more ; I've settled that.

CATARINA.

Indeed !

RODOLFO.

He's dead. There's something, Catarina,
Upon your mind. What is it ? Why so sad ?
Something you hide from me. Nay, fear no danger ;
They'll have my life before they can touch thine.

CATARINA.

No, there is nothing. I'm alarmed for thee ;
I vow 't is nothing more. I'd have thee safe.

RODOLFO.

What were you doing, when I entered here ?

CATARINA.

Be tranquil, my Rodolfo, I was cheerful.
I tried to recollect the song you sang me.
See, here is my guitar.

RODOLFO.

I sent this morning
A line by Reginella. Has my letter
Been intercepted ? Did it reach your hand ?

CATARINA.

So well, that here it is.

[She shows him the letter.]

RODOLFO.

One 's always anxious
When one has written.

CATARINA.

All the issues guarded !
No one to leave before the night !

RODOLFO.

Not one ;
That is the order.

CATARINA.

Now, having seen me safe,
Spoken with me, you must feel quite assured
That though the town 's disturbed, here we are quiet.
Pray leave me, Rodolf, in the name of Heaven !
Should the Podesta enter ! Quick, away !
And since within the palace walls you must
Till eve remain, assume before these sbirros,
If you should meet, an air of ease and calmness.
Try not to shun their presence, — no evasion.
There, let me fasten well your mantle ; now
Your hat like that upon your head. And if
Perchance they want to make you write, — some spy.
For instance, who might lay a snare, — refuse ;
Some pretext find.

RODOLFO.

But why all this precaution ?

CATARINA.

I do not choose that they should see you write ;
'T is an idea of mine. Women, you know,
Will sometimes have ideas. Thanks for this visit, —
For giving me the joy of looking on you.
You see I'm tranquil, lively, and content.
I have thy letter, I have my guitar.
Now leave me quickly ; you must go at once.
Stay ! I have yet a word.

RODOLFO.

What is 't ?

CATARINA.

Rodolfo,

You know that of the favours lovers claim
I've ne'er accorded aught ; you know it well.

RODOLFO.

Too well, my Catarina.

CATARINA.

Then to-day

'T is I who ask of you — one kiss, Rodolfo !

RODOLFO.

Foretaste of heaven !

[*Kisses her.*]CATARINA (*apart*).

Which soon to me will open !

RODOLFO.

Oh, joy !

CATARINA.

I've made you happy ?

RODOLFO.

Oh, most blest!

CATARINA.

Now leave me, Rodolf.

RODOLFO.

Thanks!

CATARINA.

Farewell!

RODOLFO.

I love thee!

SCENE VII.CATARINA (*alone*).

To fly with him! Oh, no! Impossible!
The thought smiled on me, — 't was but for a moment!
That step would be to lose, perchance destroy him.
God grant he may escape! Grant he may leave
Without obstruction or arrest! Why should
Suspicion light on him? Oh, save him, Heaven!

[*She listens at the door of the corridor.*

Still, my beloved, do I hear thy step —
Farther and farther — now 't is gone. Rodolfo,
May angels guard thee! [*Great door opens.*

Heavens!

[ANGELO and LA TISBE enter.]

SCENE VIII.

CATARINA. ANGELO, LA TISBE.

CATARINA (*apart*).

Who is this woman ?

My last night's spectre !

ANGELO.

Have you reflected, madame ?

CATARINA.

I have, my lord.

ANGELO.

You die, or give me up

The man who wrote that letter. Have you given
This matter your deep thought ?

CATARINA.

My lord, I have

Not thought a single moment on the question.

LA TISBE (*apart*).

Good and courageous woman !

[ANGELO *signs to TISBE, who gives him a white phial,*
which he places on the table.

ANGELO.

In such case

You will drink this.

CATARINA.

'Tis poison that you offer ?

ANGELO.

It is.

CATARINA.

God, one day you will judge this man.
For him I now ask pardon !

ANGELO.

As you know,
The grand Proveditor Urseōlo, madame, —
One of your ancestors, a Bragadini, —
Punished his wife Marcella this same way
For the like crime.

CATARINA.

The point, my lord, 's not one
Of ancestors, but of your infamy !
Coldly, and like a demon, do you come,
Poison in hand. You ask if I am guilty, —
As men impute guilt. No, I am not guilty !
Yet I'll not stoop to justify myself.
Soul without truth, you've no belief in truth !
'Tis not the blush of shame, but of contempt,
I feel ! You wedded me for wealth. Your love
Was for the Bragadini dues in Venice ;
Your tenderest thought was what those dues might yield
Of annual rent. "An hundred thousand ducats,
Say you ? 'Tis well ; then I will take your daughter."
And what has been that wedded life to me ?
Without love, jealousy ! My home a prison,
Yet no imputed crime ! My life, though pure,
Ever suspected ; yours, whilst gross and sensuous,
Yet ever free. Ruthless and hard with me ;
Great talk about your fathers who were Doges,
To show contempt for mine. Not one kind word.
Such was my happiness ! Ay, one *must* suffer
All this to know how woman's lot is cursed !
'Tis true, my lord, I loved before I knew you —
Love still ! Now kill me if you have the right ;

Finish with horror what's begun with hate.
 Happy in the possession of a letter,
 A scrap of — pretext! Well then, judge, condemn me;
 In secret darkness execute your will.
 You have the power; you have the — poison, — coward!
 [To TISBE.] What think you of this man, madame?

ANGELO.

Take care!

CATARINA (*to TISBE*).

And who are you? What is your purpose here?
 You play a noble part! — *his* public mistress.
 You've interest in my death; you are his spy;
 Have worked to place your foot upon my head;
 You aid him now in this abomination.
 Who knows, — 't is you, mayhap, provide the poison!
 [To ANGELO.] My lord, what think you of this woman?

ANGELO.

Madame!

CATARINA.

In truth, we three belong to a strange world.
 Hellish Republic this, where cruel men
 Trample thus mercilessly on weak woman,
 And cry one to another: "You do well!
 Foscari killed his daughter, Loredano
 His hapless wife." While at each sick'ning scene
 The State looks on with pleasure! In you two,
 The epitome of Venice is before me, —
There, Venice despot, and *here*, courtesan!
 [To TISBE.] If I exceed all bound, madame, 't is your
 Own fault. Why do I see you here?

ANGELO (*seizing her arm*).

'T is time this had an end.

CATARINA (*approaches the table to take the phial*).

Then thus I do

Your will, if it must be. No, no, I cannot —

[*She shrinks back.*]

It is too dreadful ! Think of it again
While there's yet time. You, in your strength of power,
Reflect. A woman without force, abandon'd ;
Without defence of friends or family,
In cold blood done to death, — shamefully poison'd
In a lone corner of her home ! Oh, mother !
Mother !

LA TISBE.

Poor creature !

CATARINA.

Ah, you cried, "Poor creature !"

I heard you, madame. It was you who said it ;
Do not deny it. You *can* feel pity, then ?
Oh, do not stifle it ! Let your heart be soften'd.
You see, 't is cowardly assassination !
Can you be party to it ? Impossible !
Oh, let me speak to you alone, — recount
My piteous life, — and you shall soften him.
Show him the horror of 't. For if I speak,
He knows what I must say ; but your appeal
Might greatly work on him. The word in season,
Forcibly spoke, — without self-interest, —
How often will it bring us back to reason.
Forgive, if lately I was hard upon you.
I swear I never did what was disloyal
Against my husband. You feel that I have not.
For me to tell him so is useless. Husbands
Will ne'er believe ; yet there's much truth in woman.
Reproach me not that I lack courage. Why
Seek courage in a wife ? There is no shame

In women feeling weak. We should then pity !
If that I cry, 't is because death is fearful ;
It is our nature !

ANGELO.

My patience is exhausted !

CATARINA.

There, see, he now disturbs me (is 't not so ?)
While I am pleading. Was it right ? He found
I worked on your compassion. Now he has
Broken through all ! I can say nothing more.
[To ANGELO.] Oh, ravening monster !

ANGELO.

Listen, Catarina

Bragadini ! Crime demands punishment ;
An open grave, a corpse ; an outraged husband
Demands an expiation ! By the God
Above, you waste your breath ! [Pointing to poison.
Do you consent ?

CATARINA.

No, no !

ANGELO.

Then I hark back on my first purpose, —
The swords ! The swords, Troilo ! Let them be brought !
I'll go myself !

[ANGELO goes out in excitement by the door at the end,
which is then reclosed from without.

SCENE IX.

CATARINA, LA TISBE.

LA TISBE.

Quick ! do not lose a moment.
For since 't is you he madly loves, 't is you
To whom alone I must devote my thought.
Do what is wished, — it is your only hope.
I can explain no further ; you are not
Tractable — wise ! Just now when I exclaimed
“ Poor creature,” you declared it openly,
As though to raise suspicion in your husband !
What folly ! I dare tell you nothing, lest
With hasty, hot imprudence, you disclose it.
Be advised : drink, and let things take their course.
Nor axe nor sword will pardon when it strikes.
Resist not counsel. What more dare I say ?
'T is you are loved ; and 't is my wish that — you,
Or — some one — under deepest obligation
Shall rest to me. You understand me not ? —
Though what I tell you tears out my own heart !

CATARINA.

Madame !

LA TISBE.

Resist not, argue not, nor shake the faith
Your husband has in me. D' ye see my meaning ?
With your mad fancy for repeating all,
How shall I frame my words ? Stay ! In this chamber
There exists one who soon is doomed to die ;
But 't is not you ! Now have I made it clear ?

CATARINA.

Madame, I'll do your bidding.

LA TISBE.

He returns.

[LA TISBE hurries towards door at the moment it opens.
Alone! Enter alone!

[The Sbirros are seen with naked swords in the next chamber. ANGELO enters. The door is reclosed.

SCENE X.

CATARINA, LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

She is resigned;

She'll take the poison.

ANGELO.

Then it must be quickly.

CATARINA (*to TISBE, taking the phial*).

I know you are his mistress. If your thought
Be one of secret treason, — your intent,
My ruin; to supplant me, your ambition, —
Sad as my life hath proved, such act were vile;
And hard as 't is to die in youth's fair bloom,
Such *death* were joy beside a *life* so blazon'd.

[*She drinks.*]LA TISBE (*apart*).

What useless words, good Lord!

ANGELO (*going to the door and opening it*).[*To Sbirros.*] You may depart.

CATARINA.

That drink freezes my blood!

[*Looking intently at LA TISBE.*]

What say you, madame?

[*To* ANGELO.] Are you content, my lord? I soon shall die;
 I feel it; and I cease to fear you, — demon!
 So hear me say to you, as soon to God
 I shall declare the same: There *is* a man
 I love, yet I am *pure*!

ANGELO.

I'll not believe it.

LA TISBE (*apart*).

I do believe.

CATARINA.

My powers begin to fail —

[ANGELO *approaches her, and places seat.*

No, not that seat. Off! Touch me not! I've told you
 You are a horror to me! I would die
 Kneeling before the altar there within, —

[*Advances with tottering steps towards the oratory.*

Alone, at rest; no evil, searching eyes

[*Reaching the door she supports herself against the lintel.*

Fixed on me. I would die while praying God

For you, most wicked lord.

[*She goes into oratory.*

ANGELO.

Troilo!

[*The USHER enters.*

Take in my almonry, the key
 Of my own private room. You'll find two men;
 Bring them me here without a whisper'd word.

[*The USHER goes out. To* LA TISBE.

When I have spoken to the night-watch, Tisbe,

I go to see the men they have arrested.

I will entrust to you the further care

Of what must now be done. Above all, silence!

[*Enter the two NIGHT-WATCH conducted by USHER, who
 retires.*

SCENE XI.

ANGELO, LA TISBE, *the two* NIGHT-WATCH.

ANGELO (*to the* NIGHT-WATCH).

In the night executions of the palace,
You've often been employed. You know the crypt
Where lie the tombs?

NIGHT-WATCH.

We know it well, my lord.

ANGELO.

The secret passages are so involved
That, though the palace now is full of soldiers,
You could attain the crypt, thence leave the palace
And yet be seen by none?

NIGHT-WATCH.

We can, my lord.

ANGELO.

'Tis well. Within the oratory lies
A woman who has died. Let her be taken
Secretly to the crypt. There you will find
One of the pavement slabs has been displaced,
A grave been dug. That woman you will place
Within the grave, and then refix the stone
In true position. Do you understand?

NIGHT-WATCH.

My lord, we understand.

ANGELO.

You will be forced
To pass through my apartment. I'll take care
That you shall find it empty.

[To LA TISBE.] Watch o'er all,
That it be done in safety and in secret.

[ANGELO goes out.]

LA TISBE (*taking purse and offering it to the two NIGHT-WATCH*).

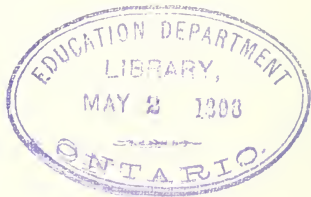
Two hundred golden sequins in this purse,
For you! The sum twice told to-morrow morn,
If you do faithfully all I direct.

NIGHT-WATCH (*taking purse*).

A bargain struck, madame. Where must we go?

LA TISBE.

That you shall know. But, first, seek you the crypt.



ACT IV.

THIRD DAY. — PART II.

SCENE. — *A bedchamber. At the end, an alcove with curtains, and a bed within it. On each side of the alcove a door,—that on the right, concealed in the tapestry; a cabinet with casket thereon; tables, arm-chairs, on which are spread masks, fans, jewel-cases half open, theatrical costumes, etc.*

SCENE I.

LA TISBE, *the two* NIGHT-WATCH, *a* BLACK PAGE, CATARINA *enveloped in a shroud and laid on the bed; on her breast is seen the crucifix of burnished copper. LA TISBE takes a mirror and uncovers the pale features of CATARINA.*

LA TISBE (*to the* BLACK PAGE).

Bring me thy light, good Page.

[She places the mirror before the lips of CATARINA.

I am satisfied.

[Recloses curtains of the alcove. To the two NIGHT-WATCH.

Do you feel sure that in your passage from
The palace hither you've been seen by no one?

NIGHT-WATCH.

The night is pitchy dark, and at this hour
The town's deserted. That we encounter'd no one,
You may be well assured. You saw us lay
The coffin in the grave and then replace
The slab. Fear nothing. We ourselves know not
If she, lying here, be dead. But this is certain,

That for the world at large she's in her tomb;
And you can act, unquestion'd, at your pleasure.

LA TISBE.

'T is well.

[To PAGE.] Where are the male habiliments
I told you to prepare?

BLACK PAGE.

They are here, madame,

LA TISBE.

And what about the horses I commanded?
Are *they* at hand?

BLACK PAGE.

Ay, madame, ready saddled.

LA TISBE.

Good horses?

BLACK PAGE.

I will answer for them, madame.

LA TISBE.

You've done well.

[To NIGHT-WATCH.] Tell me, how long time will 't take,
With perfect cattle, mind, to pass the frontier
And clear this State of Venice?

NIGHT-WATCH.

'T will depend.

The shortest route will be to Montebacco
In the Pope's States. Three hours' good travelling.

LA TISBE.

That will do. Now depart. Above all, silence.
To-morrow come and seek your promised guerdon.

[*The two NIGHT-WATCH leave. To BLACK PAGE.*
Go and make fast the door. On no pretext
Must any soul be now allowed to enter.

BLACK PAGE.

Signor Rodolfo comes by the secret door ;
Must that be likewise closed ?

LA TISBE.

No ; do not touch it.
Should he come, he may enter, but alone ;
Be that your special care. No soul beside
Must penetrate within these chamber walls ;
And you yourself, unless I sound for you,
May not return. Yet, stay ! fill me yon cup
With Cyprus wine and place it on this table.

[*PAGE pours out wine into cup and places same.*
'Tis well. Here, gentle Page, take this.

[*Giving him a ring.*

BLACK PAGE.

A pearl !

LA TISBE.

'T is thine.

BLACK PAGE.

Oh, thanks !

LA TISBE.

Now leave me.

[*The BLACK PAGE goes out*

He shall forget.

[Goes to casket and takes the black phial.

And that's where I arrive!

Fallen am I, truly, to this hopeless fancy!

See all that this unhappy world can grant me!

[Pours poison from phial into the cup.

Behold the only boon that love can offer!

[She looks towards the bed and listens; then places phial on table near the cup, and going to the bed, draws back the curtains and fixes her silent gaze on CATARINA, then takes up the crucifix which was lying on her breast.

Oh, should this crucifix bring happiness

To any living soul, it will not be,

Dear mother, to your child!

[She places the crucifix upon the cup.

There on the cup, —

'T will sanctify the draught!

[The concealed door opens, RODOLFO enters.

SCENE III.

LA TISBE; RODOLFO; CATARINA, *as before.*

LA TISBE (*starting*).

'T is you, Rodolfo!

Good! I've a word to speak that you must hear.

RODOLFO.

Madame, I also have a word to speak;

'T is you must listen.

LA TISBE.

I! To what, Rodolfo?

RODOLFO.

First tell me, are you quite alone ?

LA TISBE.

Alone !

RODOLFO.

Give orders that we be not interrupted.

LA TISBE.

They are already given.

RODOLFO.

Allow me, then,

To fasten these two doors.

[He locks the two doors.]

LA TISBE.

I wait your pleasure.

RODOLFO.

Whence come you, madame, and why look so pale ?

What has your occupation been to-day ?

What have those hands accomplished ? How have passed
The execrable minutes of this night ?

Tell me ! Yet, answer not. I will tell you.

Do not reply to me ; do not deny ;

Invent not ; lie not. I know everything.

I'll prove to you that I know all your sin.

Hadst thought of Dafne ? — but two paces off,

Divided only by a simple door,

Whence all could be distinctly heard, — nay, seen !

Remember you these words ? When the Podesta

Declared he had no poison, you replied,

“ I have some,” — yea, “ I have some ! ” Is that true ?

LA TISBE.

What if that poison were a harmless drug
To give her gentle sleep, to give her rest ?

RODOLFO.

Ay, rest eternal ! Sleep that knows no dream !
You 'd be thought innocent, yet dare not vouch it.
What harmless drug was 't, say ? — this deadly draught
Wherewith you would have *saved* her life. Quick, speak !
Be ready with your lie ! So, madame, you
Have poison ? Well, then, I — I have a poniard !
[*Draws a poniard from his breast.*]

LA TISBE (*taking crucifix from off the cup*).
Rodolfo !

RODOLFO.

Madame, you have twenty minutes
To fit yourself for death !

LA TISBE.

Ah, you would kill me !
So that is your first thought ! You 'd kill me thus, —
Yourself, — without reflection, without pause,
Being sure of nothing ! And thus jauntily
You can resolve to sweep *me* from the earth ?
So I have no more hold on you than that ?
You would kill *me*, because you love another !
Can this indeed be true ? Then tell me, Rodolf, —
Tell me with your own lips, — you 've never loved me ?

RODOLFO.

Never !

LA TISBE (*groans*).

'Tis well ; with that one word you kill me.
Your knife will but forestall a lingering death !

RODOLFO.

What! love you? A vain dream! What love had I
To give? I *never* loved you; 't is my boast!
At best, 't was pity. Now I feel not that.

LA TISBE.

Ungrateful! One word more: she whom you mourn —
You loved her deeply, Rodolf, did you not?

RODOLFO.

To ask me how I loved her! Listen, then;
And may it torture you! You ask if I
Loved one who was as pure as holy saints;
Chaste, sanctified to me, — a being who
Had long become the altar of my life!
She was my blood, my thought, my consolation,
My only treasure, dear light of my eyes;
All *that* was she to me! 'T was so I loved!

LA TISBE.

In that case, I've done well.

RODOLFO.

You have done well?

LA TISBE.

I have done well. Are you sure what I've done?

RODOLFO.

You say I am not sure! Again you say it!
Yet Dafne heard it all; and what she told me
Still rings within mine ears. These were her words:
"There were but three together in the chamber, —
She, the Podesta, and another woman,
A demon the Podesta christen'd Tisbe.

Two hours," she told me, — "hours most pitiful, —
 Two hours of agony they held her there,
 The unhappy soul, crying and supplicating,
 Asking for mercy, begging for dear life!"
 Oh, my loved Catarina! yes, you begged
 Your life on bended knees, your sweet hands joined;
 Dragged at the feet of this detested tyrant,
 Who said you Nay, and pointed to the poison, —
 Poison procured by that false-hearted Tisbe;
 Tisbe, who forced on you the deadly draught!
 Tisbe, who, when you died, bore off the body!
 Where has she carried it? That monster, Tisbe!
 See you this handkerchief, found in her chamber?
 Whose is it? Yours! This crucifix you hold, —
 Whose is it? It was hers! Am I not sure?
 Now 't is *your* turn. Beg, weep, and ask for mercy!
 But promptly, that it soon may all be over.
 I'll not inflict the hours of agony!

LA TISBE.

Rodolf!

RODOLFO.

Now, quickly! What have you to say
 To justify your deeds?

LA TISBE.

Nothing, Rodolfo!
 All happen'd as she said. Believe it all.
 In good time art thou here; I wish'd to die.
 I sought the means of dying near to thee, —
 There at thy feet; of dying by thy hand.
 'Tis more than at one time I dared to hope;
 Now I may fall, perchance, into thy arms!
 I bless thee for 't; at least thou now wilt hear
 My last words' echo, the last sigh I breathe.

I do not wish to live. Thou lov'st me not!
 Kill me! 'Tis th' only blessing thou canst give!
 Thus thou wilt take the charge of my last hour.
 I give thee thanks!

RODOLFO.

Thy thanks!

LA TISBE.

No wrath! Couldst thou
 Pour balm, 't were well. No idle words are mine;
 From a heart come they, full to overflowing.
 We mummers don't attract much public pity, —
 The world's mistake! They know not all the courage
 Or virtue which may find a home within us.
 Think you I care for life? I begged my bread
 An infant; at sixteen I yet was starving.
 Snatched from the public streets then by great lords, —
 From infamy, belike, by my own instincts, —
 While living betwixt hunger and wild revels!
 You laugh at hunger; yet I've suffered much.
 Pity, I know, is for great ladies only.
 They weep, and are consoled; yield to wild passions,
 For which you find excuses. But for us
 All's good enough! Err we? We are condemn'd.
 Trudge on, poor soul; who stoops to pity you?
 Child of the streets, were you not born to suffer?
 Did it ne'er strike you, Rodolf, I had need
 Of some heart bound to me by sympathy, —
 By cords of hope, of thought, of suffering?
 With none to love me, what must I become!
 I have no future left, — none possible!
 Think not I say these things to work on you.
 Could I, I would not, though I deeply love you.
 To what degree this stricken, misused strayling,
 This unconsider'd waif, *could* love, *has* loved,

You 'll learn when I am dead, — not until then !
 Six months we 've known ; six months my sorrowing life
 Like sickly fruit has hung upon thy stem, —
 Thy smile my joy, thy breath my inner soul !
 And yet through all, trust in thine earnest love —
 The thought that was to feed and nourish me —
 I never truly had. Now I know all !
 Poor withered heart strive not ! Thy warm pulsations
 Were but an idle toy to thy beloved !
 I pardon that. Love ne'er could be enforced.
 Yet, Rodolf, how to walk through life without thee ?
 'T is *that* I cannot do ; for soul, like body,
 To live must freely breathe. Mine breathes through thee.
 But see ! I weary you ; you do not even
 Listen.

RODOLFO.

And so I am not sure ! Attend !
 When the Podesta went for help, you — left
 Alone with that dear angel — whisper'd things
 Most horrible, that made her take the draught.
 See, madame, the very telling it distraughts
 My reason ! Speak ! where 's Catarina ? Answer !
 Is't true you 've murder'd her, empoison'd her ?
 Where is she ? Say, where have you spirited
 Away the only creature whom I loved ?
 My only, only love ! Where lies she, madame ?

LA TISBE.

His only love ! His only love ! Forbear !
 Why stab so oft ? Give me the last with this.
[Pointing to the poniard.]
 You are pitiless ! Hear then : I hate this woman !
 She hated me, and robbed me of life's hope.
 I have requited *her* as Heaven alone
 Can teach us to requite.

RODOLFO.

Then you confess, —
Truly confess; and, by the saints above,
I'd swear you make a boast of infamy!

LA TISBE.

Well might I boast, if boasting were my object.
What I have done, I had an oath to do,
~~Before~~ I knew her. That which above all
Confirmed my purpose was the love I bore you.
Now strike!

RODOLFO.

Thou fiend!
[Raises his hand with pointed. Catches sight of the phial.
Yet stay! what drug is this?

LA TISBE.

The same decreed by Catarina's husband.

RODOLFO.

Indeed! The harmless potion which gives rest!
[Takes up phial.
Madame, you've need of rest; there's your narcotic.
I doom thee not; thou'rt judged to life or death,
According to thy truth or falsity.
You did, and you did not; you saved, you killed,
You spared, you sacrificed; anon, 't is harmless,
And then again 't is death. What should I think?

LA TISBE.

Whate'er you will; the best or worst, — I care not.

RODOLFO.

Neither the worst, nor best; the true, the proved.
Admit you loved, — loved deeply, — to wound deeply,

To stab in the one vulnerable spot,
 You loved as such as you *can* love, — with passion ;
 Thence malice, thence your jealous rage. Passion !
 Whereby you dived into my heart's deep secret.
 Passion ! that baneful soil whence springs fell hate, —
 A plant whose noxious seeds shall be thy death.
 Is not this just ? Am I not logical ?
 Is it not right that thou shouldst share the fate
 Thou hast ordained ? Thine acts alone shall judge thee.
[Takes cup, and pours from phial therein.]

LA TISBE.

That were the true desire of my own heart.

RODOLFO.

And that thy true desert ; is 't not ?

LA TISBE.

I know not.

I dare not say 't would be my true desert ;
 Yet would I do your will.

RODOLFO.

Thy true desert.

[Pointing to the cup.]
This harmless, — if thou didst not poison her.

LA TISBE.

Nor did I.

RODOLFO.

Devils can, as well we know,
 Palter with truth. Granted she took the potion
 Herself. Was this the draught you pressed upon her ?
 Do not prevaricate.

LA TISBE.

You shall be answered

[*Apart.*] Oh, Heaven pardon me![*Aloud.*] That was the drug
Her husband willed that she should take!

RODOLFO.

This poison?

LA TISBE.

The same.

RODOLFO.

Confess, then, what befell her after.

LA TISBE.

Did not your watchful Dafne tell you that?
I thought she had recounted all our acts.

RODOLFO.

Your acts! Henceforth I'll minute them myself,
Watch o'er your punishment, to the last breath
You draw; to the last groan; feed on your tortures,
Till I behold you as you witness me, —
Full steeped in all the sufferings of the damn'd.

LA TISBE.

Oh, cease this violence.

RODOLFO.

Wouldst have me calm?

Calm, when thou know'st how thou hast injured me, —
Deeply and rancorously injured me?
Dammed up the sanguine current of my life,
And made a swelling flood of vengeance rise
That will engulf you, your great lord, and all!
But I'll be calm; and Heaven's awful justice
Shall not more even-handed be than mine,
Nor Solomon show wiser than your Rodolf.

LA TISBE.

Ay, wise and calm! How the heart tricks itself!
 Reason enough had I to hate this woman
 Who came 'twixt me and my life's happiness.
 She ne'er loved *me*, and yet — I pitied her.
 You *have* I loved; and you return me hate.
 You think you're calm, the while a whirlwind rages;
 But when that cloud of passion shall have passed,
 As it most surely will, and you see clearly,
 And things assume again their form and colour,
 You'll gaze in stupor on my corpse before you
 And wonder how I should have spared your love.

RODOLFO.

You would persuade me. 'Tis impossible!
 I offer you the life you offered her.
 Thy doom hast thou thyself alone decreed.
 Drink — or —

[*Holding up the poniard.*]

LA TISBE.

No threat! That can I *not* obey;
 Compel me with your *will*, — I do your bidding;
 Without compulsion it would be self-murder.

RODOLFO (*throws away the poniard, and offers her the cup*).

Then thus do I compel. Now, in all honour
 You dare not shun the test!

LA TISBE (*taking the cup*).

Then, dearest mother,
 To you, in this deep draught of life, I drink, —
 Ay, life immortal! And to *you*, Rodolfo,
 Your happiness be ever unalloyed!

[Drinks, and lets fall the cup : then looking upward.
 May she whom I have saved remember me
 When she looks up to heaven and blesses him!
 Give me thy hand that offered me the cup.

[Takes his hand and kisses it. He stands bewildered.
 Thanks, my deliverer! Leave thy hand a little;
 No harm I wish thee, Rodolf, well beloved!
 When you came in, could you have seen yourself,
 Your lifted knife, the manner of your words
 When you exclaimed, "Madame, you've twenty minutes,"
 You might have known I could no longer live.
 Now I am dying — be good! Expend one word
 Of pity on me! It were well.

RODOLFO.

What mean you?

LA TISBE.

[A murmuring voice heard behind the curtains.
 One word of kindness! Wilt not?

CATARINA.

Where am I?

Rodolf!

RODOLFO.

What do I hear? Whose voice is that?
*[Turns round and sees the pale face of CATARINA, who
 has partially opened the curtains.*

CATARINA.

Rodolf.

RODOLFO *(runs to her, and raises her in his arms).*
 Great Heaven! What means this? Catarina!
 You here! Alive! Oh, what then have I done?

[Turning to LA TISBE

LA TISBE (*dragging herself towards him*).

Nothing, Rodolfo, — thou hast nothing done.
I did it all. I longed for death, and chose
Thy hand to accomplish it.

RODOLFO.

Dear Catarina!

Alive! Just Heaven! How, then, hast thou been saved?

[LA TISBE *groans*.

Tisbe! Oh, help! Insensate that I was!

LA TISBE (*crucifix in hand*).

I'm past all help; I know it well, and thank thee.
Give full scope to your joy; think not of me.
By my own heart I know you must be happy!
I tricked her husband in the draught I gave.
The world believed her dead; she did but sleep.
Horses await you in the outer court;
Fitting disguise for her. Depart at once.
In three hours you will pass the State of Venice.
Be happy! She is free, her husband dead!
How? Ask the Secret Council; ask the Ten.
I die!

RODOLFO.

Help, Catarina!

[*Falls on his knee, his eye fixed on the dying TISBE*

CATARINA (*to LA TISBE*).

Pardon him.

I know all now. To you I owe my life!
Light breaks on me! An angel's holy impulse!
That crucifix! It was thy mother's life
My father, at my bidding, spared.

LA TISBE (*kissing crucifix*).

It was.

I die, Rodolfo; think on me sometimes,
And own that Tisbe had some good in her.

[*To CATARINA.*

Allow me, while I live to say Rodolfo,
Rodolfo, bless thee!

RODOLFO.

I have been thy curse!

Oh, pardon me, and let me bless *thee* dying!

My Catarina saved —

LA TISBE.

By me, for thee!

[*LA TISBE dies*

THE END.

AMY ROBSART.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUDLEY, EARL OF LEICESTER.
RICHARD VARNEY.
SIR HUGH ROBSART.
FLIBBERTIGIBBET.
ALASCO.
LORD SUSSEX.
LORD SHREWSBURY.
FOSTER.
ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ENGLAND.
AMY ROBSART.
JANET.

Lords, Ladies, Guards, Pages.

TIME. 1575.

AMY ROBSART.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A large gothic chamber. Glass door at back, open window on right. A chair of state with double seat, surmounted by the coronets of an earl and countess; black velvet drapery conceals the legs of this chair. A table with twisted legs.*

SCENE I.

EARL OF LEICESTER, VARNEY. *Both enter speaking.*

LEICESTER *places a little iron box on the table.*

LEICESTER.

Thou'rt right, Varney, though thy counsel be hardly that of my conscience. To avow my secret marriage with Amy Robsart to the Queen is at present impossible. Elizabeth does me the rare and distinguished honour of visiting me in my castle of Kenilworth. She will be here in some hours, bringing in her train my antagonist, or rather my enemy, the Earl of Sussex, to whom she would reconcile me.

VARNEY.

Now, the Virgin Queen, as people call her, does not willingly allow that those who aspire to her favour be, any more than herself, swayed by the human law of love. To confess, then, that neither your heart nor hand is free would be to give the Earl of Sussex such an advantage —

LEICESTER (*interrupting him impatiently*).

I tell thee, Richard, I shall do whatever thou wishest, whatever the difficulty of the situation demands; but for all that, my soul is not the less filled with trouble and anguish. What is royal favour in comparison with domestic happiness? What is the enmity of Elizabeth when pitted against Amy's love?

VARNEY.

If my lady had heard the Earl of Leicester draw that parallel, her heart would have been penetrated with gratitude.

LEICESTER.

My darling Amy!

VARNEY.

If my lord of Sussex had heard the Earl of Leicester heave that amorous sigh, his heart would have been swelled with hope.

LEICESTER.

Sussex! Sussex! I have resolved to keep silent, I tell thee! Yet if the Queen discover without me that which thou dost prevent me from discovering to her myself —

VARNEY.

Do not be alarmed, my lord. The ruins of the old mansion of Kenilworth are so placed as to escape the prying curiosity of everybody. It is at a distance from the new castle, and is believed to be both uninhabitable and uninhabited. And, in sooth, if the mysterious dove of my lord did not find a nest therein, one might say — even though it still harboured our surly old warder, Tony Foster — that thrushes were its only tenants.

LEICESTER.

'T is well; leave me, Varney. Go, give an eye to the preparations for the reception of the Queen. I must speak to our worthy astrologer.

VARNEY (*affecting surprise*).

What! you have brought Alasco here, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Yes, on yesterday. Didst not know it? He is confined in the secret chamber, above. Have some provisions brought him, Varney, while I question him on a certain horoscope.

VARNEY.

Enough, my lord.

[VARNEY bows and withdraws.

SCENE II.

LEICESTER *alone*.LEICESTER (*slowly approaching one of the windows*).

Not a cloud in the sky. Ah, if it be true that our destiny can be subjected to the action of the stars that sparkle over our heads, never was the revelation of their influence more needed by me than at this very moment, for my earthly path is darkened and confused.

[*He sits near the table, opens the iron casket, and draws from it a small parchment inscribed with cabalistic signs.*

I cannot withdraw my eyes from these mysterious signs, traced by the hand of Alasco. Am I right, in good truth, in trusting to these lofty predictions? What would England say if it knew that at this hour the

noble Earl of Leicester, the all-powerful favourite of Elizabeth, was seeking, like a child, to read his destiny in the symbolic lines of an astrologer? And yet, hath not my weakness been shared by all who have cherished some supreme ambition in their hearts? Vulgar destinies need no horoscope; but, before crossing the Rubicon, more than once did Caesar take counsel with the prophetesses of the Gauls!

[He approaches the wall at the back, opens a little concealed door, and, after looking round him anxiously, calls in a muffled voice.

Alasco! Demetrius Alasco!

[A little man, advanced in years, descends a narrow dark stair. He is clad in a grey, flowing robe. He is bald-headed, with white beard and grey eyebrows.

SCENE III.

LEICESTER, ALASCO.

ALASCO.

At your service, my lord.

LEICESTER (*showing him the parchment*).

Dost thou know, old man, that in this thou hast given expression to many audacious fancies? This night no cloud has dimmed the sky, and so to thee it must have been an open book. The stars have not, then, confirmed these rash predictions of thine?

ALASCO.

I have, on the contrary, seen again, my son, in your star that which it has already revealed. Earl of Leicester,

great is thy ambition, but greater still shall be thy fortune !

LEICESTER.

Then thou wouldst have really caught a glimpse of something through the shadow of my destiny ?

ALASCO.

Need I repeat it? A throne. And what a throne! The first of the world!

LEICESTER.

Old man, dost weigh thy words ?

ALASCO.

You ask the truth, my lord. I know it is not always prudent to tell it to those who are masters of the earth.

[At this moment LEICESTER happens to catch the false and piercing eye of ALASCO fixed on him. He quickly places his hand on his dagger.]

LEICESTER.

Wretch ! thou deceivest me ! By the soul of my ancestors, thou dost dare to palter with me ! Thou shalt pay dear for thy impudent jest.

ALASCO.

He jesteth not who hath his eye on heaven, his foot in the grave ! Listen, my son. To-day it is full April moon in the great Chaldean arc. It has been announced to me that on this day your unworthy servant was to incur a mortal peril, from which he would escape safe and sound. I am old, feeble, and defenceless, and you are young, strong, and armed ; yet I have more confidence than you in the double prognostications : your star has not lied, and you will not kill me.

LEICESTER.

The proof! the proof! Give me proof that I am not the dupe of an impostor!

ALASCO.

The proof? The proof is that while predicting a royal future I am not ignorant of the obstacles the past throws in its way.

LEICESTER.

How? What obstacles? What dost thou mean? Who has told thee?

ALASCO.

Remember, my son that you had me dragged yesterday like a wild beast from my obscure retreat; that a carriage closed to every eye conducted me to this donjon, isolated from all the abodes of men; that no human voice has struck my ear for twenty-four hours; and that, deprived of food and sleep, as the cabalistic law prescribes, I have spent the night in this narrow turret, studying for you, with my dim eyes, the book that has no leaves. Now question me, and try to discover if human agency could have taught me that this ruin is not deserted, as is believed, and that it conceals from the world an inmate —

LEICESTER.

God! Stop! silence! He is right. How could he have known?

ALASCO (*drawing a parchment from his bosom and appearing to examine it attentively*).

The irregularity of the stellar zones indicates that the birth of the young girl, although honourable, is inferior to the rank of the noble earl. Nevertheless, the crossing of the lines announces a legitimate marriage, which is kept

secret, as the neighbourhood of the nebulous chormith proves. But this marriage cannot fail to be dissolved; for the pale star of the young lady will disappear in the hair of the great comet from the southern quarter, which draws in its train the beautiful star of the glorious Earl, and represents —

LEICESTER.

And represents? Finish! wretch, finish!

ALASCO.

Do you insist, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Make haste, I order you.

ALASCO.

I am but an impotent old man; that which my mouth utters, my mind has not conceived.

LEICESTER.

Speak, I say! wilt speak?

ALASCO.

The great crowned comet represents a high and sovereign dame who is to come from the south —

LEICESTER.

What is he saying? Old man, what dost thou hide under these mysterious words? Who is — who is, I say, this puissant personage?

ALASCO.

The Earl of Leicester is not ignorant of the symbols of heraldry; he will be able to recognize her by her crown.

LEICESTER.

Heavenly powers !

ALASCO.

This sovereign brings with her hither a vague tenderness — that shall become clearer and stronger. And perhaps — What is love compared to ambition ? The hand that bestows a sceptre is not refused. The lord of this castle is not accustomed to halt on the road of greatness —

LEICESTER (*bewildered*).

Enough, old man, enough ! You speak to me of the future, and your voice troubles my soul, as if 't were the voice of remorse !

ALASCO.

Good my lord, if —

LEICESTER.

Enough, I tell the ! Alasco, if thou valu'st thy life, bear this always in mind : he who knows everything must know how to be secret about everything. I will reward thy words generously, — thy silence more generously still. [*He throws him a purse of gold.*

[VARNEY returns, followed by a servant carrying a basket containing refreshments. The servant places the basket on a piece of furniture and goes out.]

SCENE IV.

LEICESTER, ALASCO, VARNEY.

VARNEY.

Your orders are executed, my lord. The Castle of Kenilworth is ready to receive her Majesty the Queen.

LEICESTER.

I am now going to get myself ready, and shall return here immediately, to comply with a gracious wish expressed by the lady of the house. Do you, Varney, take care of Alasco. Pay him all the respect his age and learning demand. [VARNEY bows. LEICESTER leaves.

SCENE V.

ALASCO, VARNEY.

VARNEY (*regarding ALASCO with a smile*).

Well, thou old devil's cub, so our master, — thine and mine, — is thy dupe? The royal lion of England has been caught in thy snare, fox?

ALASCO.

You might express yourself in more seemly fashion, my son. If my science —

VARNEY (*interrupting*).

Thy science! Go to! Lay aside the mask with me who know thy face. Wilt dare tell me thou hast truly read in the stars the astounding revelations which thou hast just made to the Earl?

ALASCO.

At least, mysterious means —

VARNEY.

Yes, yes; a parchment a nimble and stealthy messenger of mine glided into thy hand yesterday evening on thy arrival.

ALASCO.

Ah! Then the young man who spoke to me in the darkness came from you? Who was he, prithee? His voice sounded familiar to me.

VARNEY.

A page the devil has placed at my disposal. So thou hast known how to profit by the information he brought thee.

ALASCO.

Why not? It left me a little precious time for the more useful purpose of observing occult nature for the conquest of the universal science. One step more and I shall have penetrated into the recesses of the laboratory of creation, shall hold in my hands the generating principle of gold! And then it will be my turn to be thy master, insolent favourite of the favourite!

VARNEY.

Tut! tut! Master Alasco, let us not quarrel! I have such faith in thy science that were I to lose thy favour I were fain to eat nothing but fresh eggs for the next three months.

ALASCO.

Thou saucy fellow! *my* philters! my draughts! Dost think I would waste them on thee? Dost think I would expend for sake of thy miserable life those sublime quintessences of rarest plants, of purest minerals, wherein are concentrated so many precious elements that the domains of a Leicester would not pay for a single phial of them. Rest easy, Varney! Though, in good sooth, one could extract more venom from thy body than from a viper, thou'rt not worth a drop of my poisons.

VARNEY.

Nothing thou hast spoken so far has reassured me so much as thy last words.

ALASCO.

And as for penetrating thy master's secrets without thy aid, Richard Varney, I could do so as readily as I have penetrated thine !

VARNEY.

My secrets ? It is not hard, by my faith, to know them. I have none.

ALASCO.

Of a truth ? This clandestine marriage of Leicester, the breaking of which thou hast so much at heart, — it is his interest that moves thee solely, is it not ? — because 't would stop him in his splendid career ?

VARNEY.

Granted ; and perhaps, too, to exchange the livery of a nobleman's equerry for the mantle of a king's master of the horse.

ALASCO.

And for this alone, my subtle Varney ? Thou wert the screen under which the brilliant Earl of Leicester was introduced to the beautiful Amy Robsart ; it was while taking shelter behind thee that, wishing to seduce Amy but seduced by her, he made her his wife. For old Sir Hugh Robsart, the man who stole away his daughter is not Dudley ; it is Varney.

VARNEY.

These secrets O perspicacious Alasco, thou hast learned from my mouth.

ALASCO.

Yes, but there are others I have read in thine eyes. Thou hast taken thy comedy seriously, good master of mine; thou lovest Amy Robsart, and that passionately.

VARNEY (*with a forced laugh*).

I! — oh, to be sure!

ALASCO (*with emphasis*).

Thou lovest Amy Robsart passionately! And if thou insistest on separating her from the Earl, it is in hope that one day she will belong to the master of the horse.

VARNEY.

Silence! Who could have told you this? Not the Countess; she is too proud!

ALASCO.

Thy uneasiness proves to me I was not mistaken. If the Earl learned in what manner his master of the horse abuses his confidence —

VARNEY.

If the Earl knew in what manner his astrologer plays upon his credulity — Come! come! Alasco, let us remain good friends! Trust me, it is the safest plan for both [*Drawing near him.*] Hearken. Your laboratory at Pelham blew up one fine morning as if 't were a volcano of hell. You know that in the domain of Cumnor we have one ten times finer, wherein you'll find furnaces and star-studded spheres, left by a former abbot, and there thou shalt melt and puff and multiply and amalgamate and vaporize and volatilize quite at thine ease until the Green Dragon become a golden goose —

ALASCO.

Good! And for entering on possession of the fine workshop, what is expected of me.

VARNEY.

To do as I say, and be silent as to what I do.

ALASCO.

Be it so. But, before all, answer me this: Are they going to keep me long a prisoner in this deserted turret? I do not fancy being alone in this fashion during the night with the screech owls and buzzards.

VARNEY.

What is that? The sorcerer frightened, like a child, by darkness and solitude? Thou'rt not making any gold so far, Alasco, and so dost not dread robbers. As to demons, they will surely leave thee quiet, in this world at least.

ALASCO.

There is not only this world; there is the other! And this very night I saw —

VARNEY.

Prithee, what? Thy master, Satan, furnished with his horns twelve cubits long, and his tail, which makes as many coils on itself as the spiral staircase of St. Paul's belfry, London?

ALASCO.

Laugh not, Varney, and speak lower. Yes, this night, at midnight, I have seen a spectre.

VARNEY.

Dost take me for Leicester, Alasco?

ALASCO.

Speak low, I tell thee! Varney, once upon a time I had a disciple, a pupil —

VARNEY.

Ay, a confederate.

ALASCO.

Silence, I tell thee! He was a queer being, capricious and malign, with the spirit of a devil and the nimbleness of a sylph, — resembling a child rather than a man, a goblin rather than a child. He was called Flibbertigibbet.

VARNEY.

In fact, a proper name for a goblin.

ALASCO.

He had a prying eye and a penetrating mind; he made himself master of certain secrets of mine —

VARNEY.

What an imprudent youth!

ALASCO.

I was obliged to separate from him. I quitted Pelham, leaving my laboratory, my alembics, and furnace at his disposal. But in a compartment of this furnace I had forgotten a little barrel of powder!

VARNEY.

Ingenious negligence!

ALASCO.

I learned two days afterward of the explosion of the laboratory. My poor pupil surely found his death in it.

VARNEY.

The poor pupil at least carried away thy secrets with him to the grave.

ALASCO.

Yes, but he is bringing them back again from it! Varney, it was he! It was his ghost that appeared to me this night under the ogive of the turret!

VARNEY.

Is it possible? And what said he to thee?

ALASCO.

Terrible things, — things that hell, death, and he alone could know. With a frightful laugh he cast in my face what he called his assassination. I half fainted with terror —

VARNEY.

And under what form did the shade of Flibbertigibbet present itself?

ALASCO.

Under that of a young demon, with skin the hue of fire. Phosphorescent sparks glowed at the tips of his black horns in the moonlight.

VARNEY (*aside*).

It must for sure have been my mad little merry-andrew.

ALASCO.

Well, Richard, what say you of this strange vision?

VARNEY.

Now, is n't it a dream rather than a vision?

ALASCO (*shaking his head*).

No, no, Varney! The infernal powers are meddling with our affairs. We must be on our guard!

VARNEY.

An additional reason why we should be united, my good father ! Alasco, it does not rest with me to restore thee at once to liberty ; but I can secretly urge Leicester to do so. Do thou help me, and I'll help thee. The Earl is about to return, and must not find us together. Keep faithfully the alliance between us, and I'll do the like. Agreed ?

ALASCO (*they shake hands*).

Agreed !

VARNEY.

Enough, my dear Alasco ; farewell ! [*Aside.*] Devil take thee, thou poisoning quack-salver !

ALASCO.

Good-bye, then, my dear Varney. [*Aside.*] May lightning blast thee, damned villain !

[*Exit* VARNEY.]

SCENE VI.

ALASCO *alone, then* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

ALASCO.

That man has no conscience ; he does not believe even in hell !

[*Suddenly a piercing voice calls from outside the hall*

THE VOICE.

Doboobius !

ALASCO (*starting*).

God ! who calls me by that name ?

THE VOICE.

Dr. Doboobius !

ALASCO.

Heavens! it is the name under which I am outlawed!
And the voice is that of Flibbertigibbet!

THE VOICE.

It is Flibbertigibbet himself.

ALASCO (*hiding his face in his hands*).

Oh, God! and in daylight now! Pardon! pardon!

THE VOICE.

Pardon? On one condition.

ALASCO.

What is it? Speak! What wouldst thou?

[FLIBBERTIGIBBET *jumps through the open casement and appears, wearing a fire-coloured costume.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*pointing to the basket of provisions*).

What would I? A piece of bread and a cup of wine.

ALASCO (*raising his head in surprise*).

Strange language for a ghost!

[*He examines FLIBBERTIGIBBET, who has opened the basket and drawn from it a flagon and piece of bread, which he eats greedily.*

But art thou not dead?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*eating*).

Yes, faith! — of hunger and thirst.

ALASCO (*touching him*).

Why, he is really alive, my poor Flibbertigibbet!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Not thy fault, good master mine, — eh? And I would not ask better than to make thee die of fear in turn. But

't is nearly eighteen hours since the ghost has eaten, and his youthful appetite brooks not further delay. Every one must live, — even phantoms.

ALASCO (*aside*).

Alive! I don't know if I would n't prefer him a spectre! [*Aloud.*] So thou hast escaped the explosion, then? By what miracle?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

There was no miracle about it; it was by address. I took good care to find out your mine, my gentle master; and though it blew up, it was when I was outside.

ALASCO.

I swear, my child —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Oh, plague take your oaths! I know you. I know, moreover, your secrets; and that makes you fear me, while I have not the slightest reason to fear you.

ALASCO (*aside*).

Confound the little wretch! [*Aloud.*] My dear Flibbertigibbet, let us forget the past! I assure thee that no one rejoices more than I do at thy return to life. But answer my questions. How is it thou'rt here?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I am here seemingly to help on the dark designs of your accomplice Varney with regard to the mysterious lady who is living here in concealment. Varney! One more player in the game into which I am beginning to see clear.

ALASCO.

But, tell me, why this odd disguise?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I gave up my trade of wizard, — it was becoming too risky, — and have taken to the stage. I am one of the troop that is to take part in the revels with which the Queen is to be welcomed by the Earl of Leicester. I play devils and goblins in the masques of Shakespeare and Marlowe, and wear the costume proper to my service to distinguish me from the gentlemen.

ALASCO (*aside*).

The ape! [*Aloud.*] How do you like your new trade?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hum! not too much! I am tired of always repeating the same phrases and making the same grimaces. By nature I am curious, and I like to be free. I would fain play a real part and mix in a real intrigue. I scent one here which, methinks, is dark enough and very interesting; and so I have not rejected the proposals of this Varney of yours, while resolved to take only such part therein as suits myself.

ALASCO.

Well, wilt thou come back to me, then?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Why not? — but with the same reservations and precautions. Have no doubt of that.

ALASCO.

As you like. I would rather fancy on my own account, a little more knowledge as to the mysterious lady, as you call her, and as to my Lord of Leicester, too, than Varney chooses to give me.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Ay, to aid you with your horoscopes, I do not doubt.

ALASCO.

The Earl and the lady are coming here in a few moments. If you could —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hear what they tell each other, and then tell it again to you? Nothing could suit me better! I shall be delighted, on my own account, to listen to a dialogue between the falcon and the dove.

ALASCO (*looking round him*).

You must be concealed somewhere —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Here is my lord's chair of state, looking as if 't were made expressly for the purpose!

ALASCO.

Good! Make haste, I hear some one coming.

[*He helps* FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *who crouches behind the chair.*

[*Aside.*] If he were only surprised there and hanged from the gutters of the castle! What a riddance!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*under the seat*).

They are coming. Go back, Dr. Doboobius.

ALASCO.

Call me not by that name!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! the serpent has cast his skin and taken a new one.

[ALASCO *returns to the turret.*]

SCENE VII.

LEICESTER *wrapped in a cloak*; AMY; FLIBBERTIGIBBET *concealed*. *The Countess enters leaning on the arm of the Earl.*

AMY.

How good you are, my lord, to have kept your promise and given way to my humour! How kind to show yourself to your poor recluse garbed as beseemeth the great prince you are. Permit me to unmantle you.

LEICESTER (*smiling*).

Thou art like other women, then, Amy? The jewels and feathers and silks are more to them than the man whom they adorn.

[*He affects to resist the Countess as she takes the mantle from him and shows him dressed in his courtier costume and wearing all his orders. He is clad entirely in white. Hose of white silk, doublet of white satin, white leather belt embroidered in silver, mantle of white velvet embroidered in silver and decorated with the star of the garter.*]

AMY.

Amy has proved to you, dear Earl, that she cannot love thee better in this glorious garb than she did when you came, a stranger, heralded by the sound of your horn, into the woods of Devon, in a simple russet brown cloak.

LEICESTER.

Thou speakest the truth, my love.

AMY.

And now, my lord, sit thou there as a being for all men to worship.

[She leads the Earl to the great chair. He sits down.]

LEICESTER.

But do thou come and share my state with me.

AMY *(sitting on a footstool at the feet of the Earl)*.

I stay here.

LEICESTER.

Thy place is at my side.

AMY.

Not so; at thy feet. Let me be, dear my lord; I am better here; I am well thus. *[Contemplating him.]* How splendid, how magnificent you are, so attired, my lord! What is this embroidered strap around your knee?

LEICESTER.

This embroidered strap, as thou callest it, is the English Garter, an ornament which kings are proud to wear. See, here is the star which belongs to it, and here the Diamond George, the jewel of the order. You have heard how King Edward and the Countess of Salisbury —

AMY *(smiling, and lowering her eyes)*.

Oh, I know — I know how a lady's garter became the proudest badge of England's chivalry.

LEICESTER.

This most honourable order I had the good hap to receive at the same time with three most noble associates, — the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Northampton, and the Earl of Rutland. But must not he who climbs a ladder begin at the first round?

AMY.

But this other fair collar, so richly wrought, and bearing some jewel like a sheep hung by the middle attached to it, — what does it signify ?

LEICESTER.

It is the badge of a venerated order, once appertaining to the House of Burgundy, — the order of the Golden Fleece. It hath the highest privileges attached to it; for even the King of Spain himself, heir of the House of Burgundy, may not, unless by assistance and consent of the Grand Chapter of the order, sit in judgment upon a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

AMY.

And to what country does this other brilliant collar belong ?

LEICESTER.

It is the Order of Saint Andrew, revived by the last James of Scotland. It was bestowed on me when it was thought the young widow of France and Scotland, the hapless Mary Stuart, would not have refused to wed an English baron. But is it not better to be a free lord of England than share with a woman that dismal and rocky kingdom of the north ?

AMY.

I think like my noble Leicester. As to myself, I should consider the hand of Dudley preferable to that of all the sovereigns of the earth.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Alas !

AMY.

What aileth thee, my lord? Dost thou think the love of a queen could be more tender and ardent than that of thy Amy?

LEICESTER (*kissing her on the forehead*).

No! oh, no! And nothing shall tear thee from my arms, my wife! My darling wife!

AMY.

Thy wife, yes. It is as thy wife that the daughter of an obscure country gentleman rests her head on the breast of the most glorious lord in the realm, — on that breast which is loaded with the badges of the most illustrious orders of chivalry of Europe. But when shall I be thy wife before all the world, as I am before God and thee?

LEICESTER.

Whenever it be possible, dear child [*He rises.*] But now thy desire hath been gratified, and in despite of my happiness near thee I must bid adieu.

AMY.

A moment, my dear lord, a moment yet! When I ask thee to proclaim me thy wife before all, thou dost not, I hope, accuse me of empty pride and vain-glory. And yet how proud I should be to be recognized as the avowed wife of England's noblest earl! But, Dudley, I think, above all, of my unhappy father. What is he saying at this very moment? What is he doing? What must have been his desolation on that day when he rose without receiving his child's accustomed kiss! My poor father! Did he believe, could he believe that I was seduced and carried off by this Varney, your equerry?

Ah, this idea is to me unbearable! He knows thee not, my Leicester; and even if he had not lowered his daughter to the rank of Varney, he could never conceive her raised to thine. My love, release me from my oath. Allow me, at last, to run to him, to undeceive him, to restore to an old man his darling daughter, and to restore her as the spouse of the glorious Earl of Leicester.

LEICESTER.

One day, yes, Amy, — one day this shall surely happen; and, believe me, thou canst not wish for that day more fondly than I. With what rapture could I retire to console thy father in his old age, and casting aside the toils and cares of ambition, spend my life at thy feet, — at the feet of the most adorable and adored woman in Europe! But alas! we must still wait and be content to hope.

AMY.

But why? Who hinders this union, for which you say you wish and which the laws of God and man alike command? Ah, did you but desire it even a little, nothing could bar your wish; for never could greater power have served juster claim.

LEICESTER.

It is easy for you to speak thus Amy. You do not understand the requirements of rank, the duties of power! And you make this request of yours on the very day when I was about to ask you to keep yourself more closely concealed than ever. Do you not know that it is to-day, almost immediately, I receive the Queen in this castle?

AMY.

The Queen? Well, what better opportunity of disclosing our marriage to her could you have?

LEICESTER.

What are you saying, my unfortunate child? Do you know what a capricious and ephemeral thing is royal favour? Such a disclosure would destroy us both. Trust to me, my darling Amy. A happier time will come; and if it does not come of itself, I will summon it. Meanwhile, spoil not our parting by desiring that which thine own interest forbids me to grant.

[*In rising to embrace AMY, he pushes the chair, which suddenly moves back and discovers FLIBBERTIGIBBET.*

LEICESTER (*perceiving FLIBBERTIGIBBET*).

What is this?

[*He tears himself from the arms of AMY and rushes on FLIBBERTIGIBBET.*

What is this rascal doing here?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*slowly raising his head*).

You see, my gracious lord. I was present incognito at the conversations of the fair Meriandre and the fair Indamara; like the jealous Odragonal, I was listening.

LEICESTER.

Indeed? Well, thy listening shall cost thee thine ears!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It is likely.

LEICESTER.

What art thou?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Whatever is your good pleasure. A living man or a corpse. A corpse if your dagger wills it so; if not, a living man, and one who liketh the end of a feast better than the beginning of a quarrel.

LEICESTER.

Thou malapert knave, playest thou with the halter of thy gibbet?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Since I can't cut it.

LEICESTER (*violently agitated*).

'Tis some emissary of Lord Sussex and my enemies. Go to! thy boldness shall receive such punishment as shall make thy fellows tremble.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

They are not numerous. My Lord Earl, three things you can do with me at your choice: hang me as thief to the topmost branch of the forest; nail me as spy to the great gate of the castle; send me as wizard to hell in flame —

LEICESTER.

This assurance is far from usual! Yet boots me much to know who has set him as a spy here. Listen, rascal. Thou hast well deserved all these punishments, — nay, worse still than these. Well, thou canst escape them and gain pardon by telling me of whom thou art the miserable instrument.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

To save my life? 'T would be cowardice!

LEICESTER.

I can do more than give thee thy life. Thou art doubtless paid for thy trade as spy; say how much, and if thou add by whom, thou shalt have tenfold what thou'rt promised. Reveal this wretched intrigue —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

To make my fortune? 'T would be baseness!

LEICESTER.

What! threats and promises avail naught with thee? Force will have more success. Who hath prompted thee to hide thyself there? Answer! if not —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I care as little for speaking or being silent as I do for the seven branches of the Marvellous Lamp; and if you had asked me in a different tone, likely I would have answered you as you wished, the man who has brought me to this bad pass being a vile intriguer whom it would like me well to see punished. Only, high and mighty lord, silence being the only superiority which I have over you, I do not see why I should renounce it.

LEICESTER.

Ah, this is too much! [*He draws his dagger.*] Traitor, thou shalt die!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! The secret shall die with me.

AMY (*terrified, holding back the arm of the Earl*).

My lord! Dudley! What are you about to do? To end our sweet love parley with a murder!

LEICESTER (*with the dagger raised*).

Ay, so that it end not in a catastrophe more sinister still.

AMY.

Ah! pardon for this poor creature, good my lord!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*aside*).

She is adorable !

LEICESTER.

Amy, stay me not ! This wretch is a spy.

AMY.

No, my lord ! Look at that ridiculous costume. 'Tis some mummer ; or, at most, a madman.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

'Tis so, noble lady, defend me ! We are related to each other. I am mad as the moon and you are beautiful as the sun !

AMY (*smiling*).

You see well he is out of his senses ! Come, my lord. Would you poniard this defenceless creature before your Amy's eyes ? Mercy ! Pardon ! From your chivalry I demand the grace granted of old to the ladies in the tourney. Grant me this poor life. Come, come !

[*She takes the dagger from the hands of the Earl, who regards her with a smile, and makes but a weak resistance.*]

Give me this villanous dagger, sir, and let it be banished from its place near a heart which is all mine.

[*She throws the dagger through the open window.*]

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*aside*).

Villanous dagger ! Beshrew me ! And it was a real Toledo poniard, damascened in gold !

LEICESTER.

You are a child, Amy ! In sparing that life you perhaps expose yours and mine.

AMY (*quickly*).

Believe it not ! An act of clemency cannot bring ill hap. Besides, how could the lot of the eagle depend on that of —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

The bat. Let me pick out the animal for myself.

AMY.

Come, my lord, let it not be said that you refused me everything to-day.

[LEICESTER *clasps her in his arms. She turns quickly to*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Thou hast thy pardon.

LEICESTER.

Yes, rascal, but not thy liberty. I must have thee in safe keeping until I know who thou art.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

You see already, fair lord, a devil; but a poor devil, and not a bad devil.

LEICESTER (*calling*).

Hola ! Varney ! Foster ! Janet ! Some one !

SCENE VIII.

The same. VARNEY ; FOSTER, *doublet of velvet and yellow stockings.* *They run in tumultuously.*

VARNEY.

What does my lord require ? [*On perceiving FLIBBERTIGIBBET ; aside.*] Ah, my little treacherous masker ! What meaneth this ?

LEICESTER.

You do your service very negligently, Foster. Who has allowed this fellow to enter ?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Scold not that clod-pate, good my lord. After the fashion of devils in all ages, I have made my way here through the key-hole.

VARNEY (*aside*).

I breathe again. He has not sold me.

LEICESTER.

Put this masker in the castle prison.

FOSTER.

In the tower where are the dungeons ; very well, my lord. Whence comest thou, then, thou red-haired devil ?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*laughing and looking at the costume of the warder*).

From the fens, — where I learned the art of catching geese with their webbed feet and yellow stockings.

LEICESTER.

Let this prisoner be kept closely confined. Nobody must communicate with him, but let him want for nothing and suffer no harm. Go.

[VARNEY and FOSTER try to seize FLIBBERTIGIBBET. He frees himself from them.]

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A moment, my masters. [*He kneels before AMY.*] You are so good that you do not need to be so beautiful as

well. Madame, to you the mummer owes his life; he hopes to pay one day the debt.

[FOSTER *and* VARNEY *drag him out with them.*

AMY.

You see well that he is more mad than wicked.

LEICESTER.

Ah! I have some vague foreboding — The solitude of this dwelling is violated. It is the small black cloud, — forerunner of the tempest. Adieu, Amy. I leave thee with Janet.

AMY.

Shall I not see you again to-day, my lord?

LEICESTER.

The duties imposed on me by the presence of the Queen permit it not. But to-morrow, when thou hearest the great bell of the castle give warning that Elizabeth has retired to her apartments, I'll profit by the respite.

AMY.

She must be very happy, this queen! she has stronger hold on thee than thy wife.

[LEICESTER *sighs deeply, embraces her, leaves and again returns.*

LEICESTER.

Farewell! farewell! [*Exit.*]

SCENE IX.

AMY, JANET.

JANET.

Oh, my lady, if you knew !

AMY.

What ?

JANET.

In the new part of the castle there are such crowds and uproar of men and horses. There are instruments playing, and such fine revels in preparation ; but we shall not see them. They say the Queen is coming, and we shall not see her either.

AMY.

Ah, I know all this ; but if I were free it is not the Queen it would pleasure me best to see.

JANET.

You knew, then, my lady ? Perhaps you also know —

AMY.

What next ?

JANET.

The name of the old man who, like yourself, appears to trouble himself very little about the revels, and confines himself to prowling around the castle.

AMY (*quickly*).

How ! What old man ?

JANET.

A tall, venerable old man with a white beard. I see him often walking on the heights that command this ruin. He sits down in the brushwood and hides his head in his hands, or raises it to the tower like a hunter on the lookout for a flying bird.

AMY.

And is it known who he is, whence he comes, or what he wants?

JANET.

No; Foster fears he is a spy of Lord Sussex, and has been thinking of some means to get rid of him.

AMY.

Janet, as thou valuest thy life, forbid him troubling this old man! Tell me, where could I see him?

JANET (*looking through the open window*).

My lady, come here! Look, look yonder! He is passing by the foot of the hill!

AMY.

God in heaven! it is my father!

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The great hall of the Kenilworth Castle.*

SCENE I.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, my lord, yes, my dear host, it must be! You and my Lord of Sussex must be reconciled this very day. Forget not that such is the pretext for our visit to Kenilworth. It is also the pretext for that private interview which I have been happy to grant you. So without further words, reconciliation —

LEICESTER (*bowing in assent*).

Your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

Enough, I am satisfied. 'Tis all I demand. Speak we now of other things. Do you know, my lord, that this domain of yours is in naught inferior to our domain of Windsor! And your reception of us is worthy of duke or peer, worthy even of a king.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Of a king! [*Aloud and bowing profoundly.*] All that which your Majesty hath deigned to honour with an indulgent glance, belongs to your Majesty; and in laying it at your feet, my sovereign liege, I but do the honours of what is your own gift.

ELIZABETH.

It is to me you owe all that I admire in this castle, — all that I am almost tempted to envy?

LEICESTER.

What Leicester is tempted to envy the possession of here, my liege, is what he never can possess.

ELIZABETH.

How is this, my lord? Does not all here belong to you?

LEICESTER.

Does all here belong to me, my liege?

ELIZABETH (*smiling*).

My lord, there is some boldness in your respectful bearing; and at the very moment you bend your head so humbly, it seemeth to us you raise your thought very high.

LEICESTER.

Have I been so unfortunate as to offend your Majesty?

ELIZABETH.

I have not said so, Leicester. Only, when you hold in your grasp all that man can wish for, — titles, riches, honours, — and at the same time speak thus in a place where everything attests your power, I ask myself what can be the further aim of an ambition which all this cannot satisfy.

LEICESTER.

My ambition! How little your Majesty knows of the soul of Leicester. Take from your unworthy servant his castles, his earl's coronet, his peer's robe, despoil him of all your bounty hath bestowed on him, leave to Dudley — become once more the poor gentleman you found him — but his father's sword and the donjon of his ancestors, and his heart will preserve in exile and oblivion the same gratitude, the same love towards his Queen.

ELIZABETH (*aside*).

Love! [*Aloud*]. Well, yes, I see your emotion and am touched by it. Dudley, methinks I sometimes see a cloud of sadness on that brow which ought to be radiant only with joy. What aileth thee? Why do you not bare your soul to my eyes? Am I your enemy?

LEICESTER.

I have a secret, in good sooth, my gracious liege. Such goodness should embolden me, perhaps, to —

ELIZABETH (*gently*).

You do not finish, Leicester. Do you fear that your secret might be guessed —

LEICESTER.

I fear, madame —

ELIZABETH.

Go to! your secret might be guessed, and yet you have naught to fear withal —

LEICESTER.

Ah, your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

That name by which you call me restores me to myself. Alas! I sometimes forget that I am queen, to remember that I am woman. If I were like others, free to consult my heart, then perhaps —

LEICESTER.

Madame —

ELIZABETH.

But no, — it cannot be! Elizabeth of England must be the wife and mother of her people alone.

LEICESTER.

I have at least lost none of the precious favour of my Queen?

ELIZABETH.

No, Leicester, no! Quite the contrary! We were speaking, I think, of your fair domain. Why, then, are you unwilling that I should visit your ruined donjon, which has such an imposing effect when seen from a distance?

LEICESTER.

That ruin is deserted, your Grace, and hardly accessible.
[*The door opens at the back; appears an USHER, who halts at the threshold.*]

ELIZABETH.

Who is this, pray? Who dares enter here without an order?

SCENE II.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, AN USHER.

USHER (*bowing profoundly*).

I obey the instructions of your Majesty. You bade me introduce, before the reception of the two noble earls, an old gentleman for whom my Lord of Sussex has demanded an audience of your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Ah! I remember; I promised, in truth, my Lord of Sussex to receive an old officer who has fought under my orders, and has some complaint or other to present.

LEICESTER (*smiling*).

A complaint! Against me, no doubt?

ELIZABETH.

Sussex would not dare. But I must receive this gentleman.

LEICESTER.

My liege, I withdraw.

ELIZABETH (*with a smile*).

Go!

[*She gives him her hand to kiss.*]LEICESTER (*bows, and on going out, says to the USHER*).

Introduce the old man.

SCENE III.

ELIZABETH, *then* SIR HUGH ROBSART.ELIZABETH (*alone*).

Why am I queen? The daughter of Henry VIII. the wife of Dudley, — that can never be! And yet he is so grand, so noble! his glance at once so tender and so proud! But to marry him would be to abdicate! What do I say? Is it not he who really reigns?

[*The door at the back opens. SIR HUGH, in deep mourning, throws himself at the feet of the Queen.*]

SIR HUGH.

Justice, madame! justice!

ELIZABETH.

Rise, sir! You approach your Queen in very bold fashion.

SIR HUGH.

No, madame; I will remain at your feet until you have heard me. Your Majesty will not refuse the

august and last succour that is left me. You will not repulse an old man, an old servant, who has shed his blood for you, — an outraged father, who comes to ask at the hands of the Virgin Queen the return of a daughter ravished from his arms.

ELIZABETH (*in a gentler tone*).

Your daughter has been taken from you, then? Rise, I say! Your daughter has been taken from you? And who would dare to do such a deed in this realm of England, which God and the saints protect? Your name?

SIR HUGH.

Hugh Robsart, of Templeton.

ELIZABETH.

Are you descended from that Roger Robsart who did such valiant service to our ancestor Henry VII. at the battle of Stoke?

SIR HUGH.

Yes, madame; and as Lord Sussex will tell you, I have fought faithfully for your Majesty myself.

ELIZABETH.

Speak, then, in all confidence; and believe that we are as true a lover of justice as you are loyal subject.

SIR HUGH.

I had but one child, a daughter, gracious madame; and an old father, who is near the tomb, may be pardoned for placing all his pride and joy in an only daughter. Well, madame, an infamous seducer came to me, in my retirement, as a friend. He spoke with the guile of the serpent, and my daughter has followed him.

ELIZABETH.

In truth, I pity you. We who are a crowned Queen do not know how any woman can let herself be ensnared by the wiles of a man. But it seemeth possible, since your tale has no other burthen. And what, Sir Knight, is the name of the ravisher?

SIR HUGH.

He is — Gracious madame, he is one who has puissant protection.

ELIZABETH.

Well, is his protection more puissant than ours?

SIR HUGH.

Pardon, my liege! I am little accustomed to the language of Courts, and know little of the value of words. This ravisher is the equerry of the Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH.

Of Leicester! The most blameless man in all England has a seducer in his household! The name of this miserable equerry?

SIR HUGH.

This coward who attacks the virtue of maidens and flies from the swords of men is called Richard Varney.

ELIZABETH.

Richard Varney? — good. And your daughter's name is Amy, is it not? What has he done with her?

SIR HUGH.

Alas! madame, she is here. — even here. I saw her at one of the windows of the ruined donjon at the end of the park.

ELIZABETH.

What? Lord Leicester told me that donjon was uninhabited. Are you sure of what you say? Have you tried to enter?

SIR HUGH.

The door has been kept closed against me. It is no doubt because this ruin is deemed deserted that the scoundrel Varney has concealed my unhappy Amy in it.

ELIZABETH.

Old man, you shall have justice. God's death! We are the born mother and protector of the maidens of England. A base equerry seduce the heiress of an honourable house! My Lord of Leicester will be exasperated when he hears of this abominable deed. We promise you, Sir Knight, our influence with him against this Varney whose credit with my lord you seem to fear.

[*She goes to a table and affixes her seal to a parchment.*

Take this safe conduct before which all doors open, and assure yourself whether your daughter is really concealed in this donjon. You have our leave to withdraw, for the Court is waiting to be introduced. [*She strikes a bell. An usher appears.*] Conduct this gentleman, and let the two lords enter with their attendants.

[*SIR HUGH leaves by a lateral door. The great folding-door at the back opens, and leaves free passage to the Court.*

SCENE IV.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, VARNEY, SUSSEX, SHREWSBURY.
*Ladies, Bishops, Peers, and Officers of the Queen.
Knights, Pages, and Guards of the attendants of the
suites of the two Earls. The two lords enter at the*

same time through the great folding-door at back. They salute the Queen and arrange themselves with their partisans, each on one side of the scene. The Queen is seated in the middle.

ELIZABETH.

My lords, what means this? We bring you hither to be reconciled, and you show your antagonism in the royal presence! Come, draw near each other and join your hands, which must never be separated when the needs of our service require them to be united.

[The two Earls bow, but remain silent in their places.]

My Lord of Sussex, my Lord of Leicester, have ye heard us? What signifies this unwillingness to move? this silence? Will neither of you take the first step?

LEICESTER.

My liege — *[Aside.]* An uncouth soldier!

SUSSEX *(aside)*.

A foppish upstart! *[Aloud.]* Your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

Yes, so we are called; and because we are so called, noble Earls, you shall obey us. *[To LEICESTER.]* Dudley, you are the youngest, and he is your guest. It is for you to take the first step. *[To SUSSEX.]* My Lord of Sussex, to please me you would fly to a battle, and you retreat before a reconciliation!

SUSSEX *(without moving)*.

Madame, I were well content my Lord of Leicester should say in what I have wronged him, since there is nothing I have said or done which I would not be willing to justify either on foot or horseback.

LEICESTER.

And for me, always under the good pleasure of my gracious sovereign, my hand shall be as ready to justify my deeds and words as that of any man that ever bore the name of Ratchiffe.

[The two Earls look haughtily at one another.]

ELIZABETH.

Which of you, my Lords of Sussex and Leicester, wishes to taste the fare of our Tower of London? We are here the guest of one of you. But, by God's death! look ye to it that we make not one of you our guest before many hours. For the last time, let me see you obey and join hands in mutual love. *[In an imperious voice.]* My Lord of Sussex, I entreat — my Lord of Leicester, I command you.

[The two Earls look at each other in stubborn silence, still hesitating, but at last advance and take each other's hand.]

LEICESTER (*bowing*).

My Lord of Sussex, it is with the purest joy — *[Aside.]* A traitor who has me spied in my own house!

SUSSEX (*bowing*).

My Lord of Leicester, I am delighted — *[Aside.]* A felon who surrounds himself with poisoners and cut-throats!

ELIZABETH.

Why, this is well! Banish your jealousies and resentments. Henceforth let my two most faithful servants be at the same time two sincere friends. My Lord of Leicester, we wish to distinguish the visit wherewith we honour you by some token of grace to such of your retinue as you yourself may choose for such promotion. Whom among your officers do you deem most worthy of the honour of knighthood?

SUSSEX (*aside to SHREWSBURY*).

You'll see she will not think of mine!

ELIZABETH.

By the way, Leicester, is there not among your equerries a man named Richard? Richard — What is his name?

VARNEY (*low and quickly to LEICESTER*).

It is no doubt of me the Queen wishes to speak, my lord.

LEICESTER.

If I might venture to help your Majesty's memory, is it Richard Varney?

ELIZABETH.

Precisely, my lord. What do you think of this Varney?

LEICESTER.

He is a faithful servant of his master, and a devoted subject of your Majesty. His merit and his zeal are such as place him truly above his condition, and if —

ELIZABETH.

Is he here?

VARNEY (*eagerly*).

Here I am at the feet of your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Well, my lord, I am glad to be able to undeceive you as to the real character of a knave and a traitor who sullies your noble house. This hypocrite, whom you praise in such good faith, is but a vile ravisher. Would you believe that he has dared to seduce and carry off the daughter of a worthy gentleman named Sir Hugh Robsart?

LEICESTER (*with a cry of terror*).

Great God, madame ! [*Aside.*] Ah, the spy of Sussex !

ELIZABETH.

I share your indignation, and shall further increase it by informing you that this villain has had the audacity to conceal her in the very house where to-day you receive your Queen.

LEICESTER (*thunderstruck*).

Just Heaven ! madame, do you suppose — [*Aside.*] I am lost !

SUSSEX (*aside to SHREWSBURY*).

What does this mean ? Leicester has turned very pale !

ELIZABETH (*to LEICESTER*).

My lord, you seem disturbed !

LEICESTER.

I acknowledge in fact, madame, that —

VARNEY (*falling on his knees, crossing his hands, and bending his head*).

Madame —

ELIZABETH.

What hast thou to say for thyself ? Dost thou avow thy crime ? Hast thou carried off this girl ? Is she concealed here ? Answer, yes, or no.

VARNEY.

Yes.

LEICESTER.

Wretch —

[*He is about to throw himself on VARNEY.*]

ELIZABETH.

My Lord of Leicester, if you permit it, we shall inform ourselves touching this matter without your help. We have not ended our examination of your officer. [*Aside.*] How deeply he is moved! [*Aloud to VARNEY.*] Did the Earl of Leicester, thy master, know of this intrigue? Tell me the truth, no matter how high the head it touches, and fear not. Thine is under our safe-guard.

VARNEY.

Your Majesty wishes the truth? The entire truth, before high Heaven, is that my lord was the cause of the whole matter.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

The traitor! [*Aloud.*] Thou villain, darest thou —

ELIZABETH (*with sparkling eyes*).

Silence, my lord. Speak on, Varney! Here no commands are heard but mine.

VARNEY.

And I, like all, obey you. Yet I would fain not speak of my master's concerns to other ears than yours.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

To betray me at thy ease, thou viper!

ELIZABETH.

The concerns of thy master?

VARNEY.

Yes, my gracious liege, if your Majesty permit me to be so bold, I shall ask you to grant me a moment's secret audience. I might give your Highness explanations that perhaps would satisfy you; but if they were

public, the honour of a respectable family might suffer. These are delicate matters.

ELIZABETH.

We are content. But if thou tryest to palter with us, by the soul of my royal father, the people of London shall be witnesses to the building of thy gibbet. Leave us alone, my lords, for a moment.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

I am lost !

[*All withdraw save VARNEY.*

SCENE V.

ELIZABETH, VARNEY ; *an Usher at the door at the back.*
The Queen is seated ; VARNEY remains on his knees.

ELIZABETH.

Rise and speak. What hast thou to say in thy defence ?

VARNEY.

I acknowledge, your Grace, that my crime would be great if I had, as my dread sovereign imagines, taking advantage of the weakness of a young girl, seduced and dishonoured her.

ELIZABETH.

What is this ? Richard Varney, have I been misinformed ? Is the guilty man another than thou ?

VARNEY.

No, the Queen has been correctly informed, but, gracious lady, you have not been informed of everything. Mistress Robsart is not dishonoured, unless it be dis-

honour to be the wedded wife of the equerry of my Lord of Leicester.

ELIZABETH.

What? You have married her? Amy Robsart is then your lawful wife?

VARNEY.

My lawful wife, an't please your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Take heed thou deceive us not, sirrah! If thou hast married her, why accuse the noble Earl? What dost thou charge him with? May he not have been entirely ignorant of the matter?

VARNEY.

My Lord of Leicester was, in good sooth, entirely ignorant of the matter, yet is he, I repeat it, the cause of everything. Your Majesty may judge for yourself.

ELIZABETH.

Go on, we are listening.

VARNEY.

My noble master, that glory of England's Court, hath long since renounced marriage. Some secret anxious feeling, the cause whereof none can fathom, has made him fly from all of womankind. It is said my unhappy master — But, madame, am I to repeat what is said?

ELIZABETH.

Speak on! speak on!

VARNEY.

'Tis said, my lord doth hide in the depths of his soul a passionate love for one so high above him that 't is not permitted him to hope.

ELIZABETH.

What? Still, methinks, there is no woman too highly placed to be out of reach of the noble Earl.

VARNEY.

Alas! your Highness must know well that there is one.

ELIZABETH.

What sayest thou? What dost thou mean? I do not understand thee, Varney.

VARNEY.

Guesses here are rash. Yet often have I seen my noble master, unconscious that he was observed, kiss a lock of hair. I had need to raise mine eyes very high to see its fellow.

ELIZABETH.

Well, well. You were saying then that your master—

VARNEY.

My lord, entirely absorbed in this passion, will not hear of marriage, either for himself or for any of his household.

ELIZABETH.

Poor, noble Earl!

VARNEY.

And so, being desperately in love with Mistress Amy Robsart, I thought I must conceal our marriage to 'scape dismissal from my lord's service. Have I not some cause to say then, gracious madame, that my master is the cause of this mystery and seeming crime,—that the fault is his?

ELIZABETH.

The fault is not so grave!

VARNEY.

I did but wait a favourable occasion for making a full confession to him; and now if your Majesty deign to say a few words on my behalf, I doubt not he will grant me pardon, at the same time maintaining me in my office and leaving me my wife.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, since Amy Robsart is thy wife I promise, Varney, to appease the wrath of thy master.

VARNEY.

Madame, my gratitude —

ELIZABETH.

And we are about to take such measure ourselves that Sir Hugh Robsart shall not blush for his son-in-law.

VARNEY (*bowing profoundly*).

The kindness of your Majesty doth penetrate —

ELIZABETH.

Enough, Varney; I am content with thy explanation. Usher! let the doors be thrown open.

SCENE VI.ELIZABETH, VARNEY, LEICESTER, SUSSEX, *the entire Court*ELIZABETH (*after a moment's silence*).

Your sword, my Lord of Leicester.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

The sword first, and the head after.

SUSSEX (*aside to SHREWSBURY*).

Would this mean his disgrace, I wonder?

[LEICESTER *unbuckles his sword and presents it to the Queen on bended knee.*

ELIZABETH.

Richard Varney, come forth and kneel down.

[VARNEY *obeys. She draws the sword from the scabbard; movement of surprise in the assembly, emotion among the ladies.*

LEICESTER (*aside*).

What is her intention?

ELIZABETH (*gazing on the sword with satisfaction*).

Had I been a man, methinks none of my ancestors would have loved the flashing of a good sword better. As it is, it liketh me to look on one. If Heaven had made me beautiful, it is in such a steel mirror as this I would fain arrange my woman's gear. Richard Varney, in the name of God and Saint George we dub thee knight!

[*She gives him the accolade with the flat of the sword.*

Be Faithful, Brave, and Fortunate! Arise, Sir Richard Varney. [*General astonishment.*]

LEICESTER.

Ah, she rewards the treachery of Varney before punishing mine!

ELIZABETH.

The buckling of the spurs, and what other rites remain, may be finished to-morrow in the chapel. Varney, your fortune has now had a beginning, but learn to temper your desires. I think it is that mad, gamesome fellow, Shakespeare, who says this: "Ambition doth o'erleap itself and falls o' the other side." Go!

[VARNEY makes a profound salutation. The Queen turns to LEICESTER.

Gramercy, my Lord of Leicester, banish the shadows from that gloomy brow of thine. The evil that was done has been repaired.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

What could he have said? [*Aloud.*] I do not yet know —

ELIZABETH.

Yes, my lord, you have been misunderstood; but the honour of your noble house has not been tarnished.

LEICESTER.

I do not comprehend, madame.

ELIZABETH.

You shall in a moment. But permit me first to ask you to do me a favour.

LEICESTER.

It is already done, madame, when you deign to ask it.

ELIZABETH.

It is to pardon your equerry Varney, — who, without your consent, has married Amy Robsart.

LEICESTER.

He! Amy Robsart! [*Shaking his clenched hand at VARNEY.*] Wretch!

ELIZABETH.

My lord, restrain your indignation. Since he has been so mad as to fall in love with her, and so culpable as to carry her off, you can hardly blame him for making her his lawful wife.

LEICESTER.

Thou shameless villain ! hast thou dared —

VARNEY (*bending his head*).

Good my lord and master, it was the only means of repairing a great misfortune, — of saving what else was lost.

LEICESTER.

I cannot contain myself. This audacity of thine shall cost thee dear.

ELIZABETH.

My lord, you have promised us to pardon him.

LEICESTER.

Madame, it is such an affront !

ELIZABETH.

Not by any means such an affront as Sir Hugh Robsart suffered withal.

LEICESTER.

No, madame, I am going to tell you all. Alas ! you do not know —

VARNEY (*hurriedly*).

Her Majesty knows all, my lord. She is acquainted with your invincible dislike to marriage, — a dislike so extreme that you cannot brook it even in the case of your servants. She knows that your soul hides a mysterious passion —

ELIZABETH (*quickly*).

Silence, Varney !

[*Drawing near* LEICESTER, *in a faint voice*.]

My lord, do you deny that secret passion he has the boldness to imagine ? [LEICESTER *tries to speak*.] Hush ! I understand and pity you ; but be prudent, my dear Dudley !

LEICESTER (*bowing*).

Madame, such goodness! [*Aside.*] O torture!

ELIZABETH.

My lord, we will let Varney himself complete his justification to yourself. Sir Richard Varney, it is our good pleasure that your wife be present at our reception to-day.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

God!

VARNEY.

Your Majesty shall be obeyed. Such a favour does great honour to my wife and me.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Insolent knave!

SUSSEX (*whispering to SHREWSBURY*).

He is now in greater favour than ever!

ELIZABETH.

Come, my Lord of Sussex, come, my lords and gentlemen, it is time to take your parts in the sports and interludes which the courtesy of my Lord of Leicester hath prepared for our entertainment.

SCENE VII.

LEICESTER, VARNEY.

LEICESTER (*with indignation*).

What hast thou done, thou false knave? My Amy to pass in the eyes of the world for thy wife!

VARNEY.

In good truth, my lord, I am guilty, — guilty of an insane devotion to your person. For whom have I adventured that reckless declaration? Who was on the brink of ruin? Who required to be saved? Was it I, poor and obscure, with nothing to lose and nothing to gain?

LEICESTER.

Go to with thine intentions! Was it needful thou shouldst say she was thy wife?

VARNEY.

Ought I then to let it be believed she was my mistress?

LEICESTER.

No, of a surety, no! but you ought to have — you ought to have —

VARNEY.

What, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Exposed me to danger rather than to shame. 'T would be better to have acknowledged everything.

VARNEY.

That was not the meaning of your furious look when you thought I meant to denounce you. Acknowledge everything! Overturn with a word the highest destiny in Europe, reduce to the condition of a simple country squire that illustrious Earl of Leicester who bestows peerages, appoints generals, distributes bishopricks, convokes and dissolves parliaments, the young and glorious minister for whom the very ballads of the people prophesy the most august of all unions! Excuse me, my lord, I freely grant that I had not such courage — or such baseness!

LEICESTER.

And yet, after all, is not all this greatness purchased too dear at the price of happiness? Instead of wasting my life in the struggles and perils of power, should I not be doing better, — ay, a hundred times better, — by living, as you say, like a peaceful country squire at the feet of my beloved wife?

VARNEY.

Peaceful? Pardon me, my lord, but I did not say peaceful. Beware! my lord. During the time I was speaking to the Queen, when the suspicion occurred to her that one greater than I might have been the seducer of the young girl, I saw gather on her brow all the jealous anger of the woman who loves —

LEICESTER.

What is this thou sayest? She loves me, you think, Richard?

VARNEY.

Ay, ay, she loves you! Her love for you has reached that point where rank is nothing, self-sacrifice a trifle, and every obstacle worthy only of laughter. We have seen a will less strong than hers break bonds less fragile than yours!

LEICESTER.

She loves me! Art really sure she loves me?

VARNEY.

I have only seen her vexation, but you have seen her joy. And now go to the daughter of Henry VIII. who loves you, and believes herself loved in turn; tell her of your marriage with a country damsel at the very moment she is perhaps thinking of offering you her royal hand; reveal to this Queen, who purposes making you a king,

that there is already a Countess of Leicester; go, my lord, tell Elizabeth Tudor that she has a rival, go — and I say to you that you will endanger your own head, and a head that is dearer to you than your own.

LEICESTER.

Amy! my Amy in peril! Enough, Varney! What thou hast done has been done well.

VARNEY (*aside*).

Ha! I have him at last!

LEICESTER.

We must save Amy, Varney. She must perhaps pass — for being that which you told the Queen.

VARNEY.

Still, you must remember the consent of my lady is essential.

LEICESTER.

What sayest thou? Prithee, why?

VARNEY.

You have heard the Queen, my lord. She desires that my pretended wife be presented to her to-day.

LEICESTER.

It is true. God! O God!

VARNEY.

Do you think my lady can conquer her repugnance so far as to bear my name for a little time? She is the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart, but I am now Sir Richard Varney.

LEICESTER.

It does not matter. She is Countess of Leicester, and as proud in her virtue as is Elizabeth of England in her power!

VARNEY.

Then let us not speak of it further. There is nothing to be done.

LEICESTER.

But we are lost, then! Varney, she is lost! Do not forsake me! Advise and direct me.

VARNEY.

How can I, my lord? Is it I who have influence and authority over my lady? Have I the power of convincing or the right of commanding her?

LEICESTER.

She loves me too well to allow herself to be persuaded to such a course, and I love her too well to speak as a master.

VARNEY (*folding his arms*).

Well, let us await the consequences of the fury of the Queen.

LEICESTER.

No, no. I must save her at any price. Hearken, Varney. Spare me a harrowing and most embarrassing scene with Amy. Speak to her in my name.

VARNEY.

Useless. She would not believe me.

LEICESTER.

You can at least try.

VARNEY.

'T would be a waste of time when we have no time to lose !

LEICESTER.

What if I gave you my orders to her in writing ?

VARNEY

They should be decisive and imperious. You must give me full powers.

LEICESTER (*hesitating for the last time*).

Well, be it as you wish.

[*He goes to the table, writes a few words, and hands the paper to* VARNEY.

Is that sufficient ?

VARNEY (*after reading*).

Yes, my lord. We must, however, take our precautions in case my lady, notwithstanding this written order, should refuse to present herself to the Queen.

LEICESTER.

What could we do then ?

VARNEY.

The only thing in our power would be to conduct the Countess to your domain of Cumnor, by force if need be, and tell the Queen she has fallen dangerously ill. [*Aside.*] It is a domain in which Alasco rules.

LEICESTER.

What ? violence !

VARNEY.

For sake of her own safety.

USHER (*entering*).

Her Majesty commands the attendance of my Lord of Leicester.

[*On a sign from LEICESTER the USHER leaves.*]

LEICESTER.

Well, well ! I trust her, as I trust myself, to thy fidelity, Varney. And now I go to meet the Queen. Oh, what a situation is mine, — placed between two women, one of whom has the power, the other the right ! [*He retires.*]

VARNEY.

Yes, my master ; and what renders the situation still graver is that you are at once weak and ambitious ! [*Reading the paper again.*] “ Amy, trust all that Richard Varney tells you. Whatever he does, it is by my order and by my will.” Ah, now, proud Amy, you are mine !

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Same as in first act.*

SCENE I.

VARNEY, ALASCO.

VARNEY.

We are nearing the end of our ambitions, Alasco; one more effort and we shall have a king for our master. You say you think Flibbertigibbet might be useful to us? In good truth, he did not betray me yesterday.

ALASCO.

Yes, if you require for your expedition some one who is young, alert, and intelligent —

VARNEY.

Oh! my object is simply to get hold of a person who might be troublesome, and bring that person secretly to Cumnor. But who will answer for your pupil?

ALASCO.

He is at this moment, as the saying is, at death's door, and will be glad to get out of his unpleasant plight at any price. Yet such is the craft of the fellow that it would not surprise me if he were out of prison at the very time we are speaking.

VARNEY.

Tush, tush! he is not as cunning as this prison is strong. It has only one outlet, and this outlet opens on

the passage between the dungeons. So that if I wished to rid me of thy pupil, I would open the door instead of shutting it, being careful first to draw the bolt of the trap-door, and would send him very quickly to frighten the rats in the cellars of the donjon by a visit made in the perpendicular.

ALASCO.

All very well. But how can you reach him. The Earl, in your presence, forbade Foster any communication between him and any one whatever, and his prison has, as you say, but one door.

VARNEY.

Yes, one visible door. But listen; there is another concealed one that communicates by a secret passage with the turret which you use as a laboratory. I alone know all the windings of this castle.

ALASCO.

As Beelzebub knows all the windings of thy soul.

VARNEY.

Not unlikely. Here is the key of the secret door of which I spoke. Find Flibbertigibbet, lay before him our proposal. If he accepts it, enlist the imp in our service; if he refuse, why, thou canst avail thyself of this visit to drop something in his drinking water —

ALASCO.

Good, good! Is that all?

VARNEY.

Not yet; I have kept the most important matter for the end. Thou must prepare, on the instant, a sleeping potion, which, administered in a given case, to a woman

for example, may send her into a sleep at once, and that sleep so profound that she shall let herself be taken to a carriage, and may travel a whole night without awaking and, consequently, without giving the alarm or making resistance.

ALASCO.

I agree. And for whom is this potion intended?

VARNEY.

Ask the planets.

ALASCO.

Must I stop at sleep?

VARNEY.

Thou damned old poisoner, I order a harmless drink of thee, — harmless, dost thou understand? Harmless! dost understand the meaning of the word?

ALASCO.

Very well; I am not to be asked, then, to affect the House of Life?

VARNEY.

Take thou good care not to affect this house if thou'dst save thine own hovel! If thy dose be not as inoffensive as a glass of water, I swear to thee on my soul, thou shalt suffer as many deaths as there are hairs on thy head. Dost laugh, thou old satyr!

ALASCO.

Doubtless. [*Taking off his cap.*] I am bald, and then too, you swear by your soul.

VARNEY.

I hear some one walking in the gallery. Come, set about thy sleeping mixture; and mind, above all, it be

harmless, thou devil's apothecary! I shall return to show thee the secret passage.

[*He pushes him to the secret stair, enters after him and shuts the door.*

SCENE II.

AMY, *a casket in her hand*; JANET, *with a mantle which she throws over the back of a chair*; afterward,
FOSTER.

AMY.

Janet, open the window on the side next the new castle. Methinks I shall so hear better the tolling of the great bell which is to announce to me the near arrival of my lord. Make an end of my attiring. Quick, my necklace, my bracelets.

[JANET *draws them from the casket and fastens them on her mistress.*

JANET.

They are very white, these pearls; but this arm is still whiter. All the same, they are magnificent! I am sure every one of them must be worth —

AMY.

Fie, fie, Janet! All the galleons of Portugal could not pay for them; 't was he who gave them to me!

JANET.

You are very beautiful, my lady!

AMY.

May he think as thou dost, child! Alas! If I ever had any beauty, it has had to stand many a severe ordeal. My poor eyes have shed many tears since I left

my father. My father! When I think that he is here, that he is near me! Ah, I am both afraid and anxious to see him. [*Enter FOSTER.*] What is your business with me, good Foster?

FOSTER.

My lady, you are about to receive a visit.

AMY.

A visitor to me, Foster? You forget your instructions; I am forbid to leave the castle, and no one is allowed to enter here.

FOSTER.

Yes, my lady; but when a visitor presents such a pass as this —

[*He hands a parchment to AMY.*]

AMY (*casting a glance on the parchment*).

A pass from the Queen! Foster, let him enter. There is no door in England which must not open before this.

[*FOSTER throws open the door. Enters SIR HUGH ROBSART.*]

SCENE III.

The same; SIR HUGH ROBSART. SIR HUGH stops on the threshold. AMY utters a cry.

AMY.

O God! my father!

[*She makes a sign, and FOSTER and JANET go out.*]

SIR HUGH.

Yes, God and your father. Your father who is here in your presence, and God who has led him hither.

[*AMY rises and runs up to him. He draws back.*]

AMY (*stopping*).

Father!

SIR HUGH.

Madame! I do not know if it is by that title I am to address you.

AMY.

Ah, these are hard words! Call me your daughter. You are my father always.

SIR HUGH.

Your judge, Amy.

AMY.

Oh, do not freeze me with that gaze! If you only knew —

SIR HUGH.

What? Finish! I will not condemn you unheard.

AMY.

And I have taken an oath. I cannot speak.

SIR HUGH.

Alas! do I not already know a part of the truth? Have you not left your father to follow your seducer, this equerry of Lord Leicester, this —

AMY.

Father, you are mistaken. Appearances —

SIR HUGH.

Appearances! See, I am in mourning, you in holiday garb. Is this appearances? Come, tell me, of whom are you the mistress?

AMY (*raising her head*).

Father, I am married!

SIR HUGH.

Married? Married to whom?

AMY.

To whom? Ah! that name must not leave my lips.
I have promised — nay, sworn —

SIR HUGH.

I have my doubts about a husband whose name his wife cannot pronounce before her father.

AMY.

Once you would have believed my lightest word —

SIR HUGH.

Yes, once.

[*The tolling of the great bell is heard.*]

AMY.

Ah, the great bell! At last! He is coming!

SIR HUGH.

Who is coming?

AMY.

My husband, father. Hearken, I cannot name him to you, but you can see him. Do you know by sight any of the lords of Elizabeth's Court?

SIR HUGH.

I have frequented camps more than Courts. Still, I know a few of them, — the Earl of Sussex, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Shrewsbury —

AMY.

Are these all?

SIR HUGH.

This morning I saw the young Marquis of Northampton — and (I was forgetting) the owner of this Castle of Kenilworth, the favourite minister of the Queen, the master of your seducer, Lord Leicester.

AMY (*leading SIR HUGH to the glass door of the gallery at the back of the hall*).

Come, my father, retire into that gallery; he whom you will see enter, in a few moments, is the noble and honoured spouse of your Amy.

SIR HUGH (*in a milder tone*).

I must, then, give way to your follies, my daughter.

AMY.

You will not regret it, my father. A last word. In the conversation I am about to have with my husband there may be secrets it would be criminal to betray. Promise, therefore, to so place yourself as to see everything and hear nothing. Do you promise?

SIR HUGH

On my knightly faith.

[*He enters the gallery.*]

SCENE IV.AMY, *then* VARNEY.AMY (*alone*).

I am, perhaps, wrong in thus eluding the prohibition of my husband. I shall ask his pardon for it. He will understand that I could not allow my father to suffer

any longer. — Ah, it is he! [*Running to the door.*] My Dudley!

FOSTER (*announcing*).

Sir Richard Varney. [*He retires, enters VARNEY.*]

AMY (*surprised*).

You, Master Varney! What does this title mean?

VARNEY.

It is a title her Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer on me to-day.

AMY.

Ah, accept my congratulations. But what brings you here?

VARNEY.

The express order of my master, my lady.

AMY.

I was expecting himself.

VARNEY (*presenting the note*).

He has charged me to hand you this.

AMY (*sadly*).

He will not come!

VARNEY.

Matters of importance — his duties near the Queen —

AMY.

I see that my lord has charged you, sir, with a mission to me. Speak, I listen. Well, why do you hesitate?

VARNEY (*with feigned embarrassment*).

It is because — I do not know — what I shall say may offend you, my lady.

AMY.

Nothing coming from my lord can offend me. Speak, Master Varney.

VARNEY (*aside*).

She will not deign even once to address me as Sir Richard. [*Aloud.*] I am charged, madame, to prepare you for a sad change of fortune.

AMY.

What do you mean?

VARNEY.

You must know, my lady, how inexorable is the will of the august sovereign who wields the sceptre of England.

AMY.

Undoubtedly; and what Englishman does not feel a pride in obeying that glorious Queen who has vowed in presence of all her people to live and die a virgin queen?

VARNEY.

If this double title be the cause of your respect for her Majesty, you must lessen that respect by a full half. The approaching marriage of her Highness is commonly spoken of.

AMY.

Yes, indeed, I now recollect there has been some talk of a Spanish or French prince in this connection. Was not King Philip mentioned? or the Duke of Anjou? or was it not rather the Duke of Alençon?

VARNEY.

You are not correctly informed, my lady. The Queen, who might choose a consort from any of the proudest royal houses in Europe, has deigned to cast her eyes on one of her own subjects.

AMY.

Really! The Duke of Lincoln, perhaps?

VARNEY.

He is a Catholic!

AMY.

Perhaps the Duke of Limerick, then?

VARNEY.

An Irishman!

AMY.

In that case the only one left is the Duke of Rutland.

VARNEY.

He is married,—not that that would be much of an obstacle, either.

AMY.

What is this you have dared to say, sirrah?

VARNEY.

A sad truth, madame, if we look to the requirements of State policy. Crowned heads are not subject to the common law, and marriages that trouble thrones are easily broken.

AMY.

How say you, sir? The throne is but the throne, while marriage is the altar.

VARNEY.

Oh, yes! But then, the altar too—

AMY.

Besides, how doth the marriage of the Queen concern me?

VARNEY.

More than you wot of, my lady. Moreover, my Lord of Rutland is not the bridegroom of whom there is question. Among all our English lords, it is not he who wears the coronet of a duke to whom such grace is likely to be done; it is a simple earl.

AMY.

Good God! what do these threatening words conceal? You announce to me a change of fortune. The Queen is at Kenilworth. My husband gives festivals in her honour. Might it be himself?

VARNEY.

It might be himself, madame.

AMY.

Just Heaven! Dudley, my high-souled, generous Dudley deceive and forsake me! He, a peer of England! Thou liest, false varlet!

VARNEY.

I have said nothing, madame.

AMY.

No, but thou hast let me understand everything. To whom art thou traitor here?

VARNEY.

I said well that my words would offend you, my lady. Ah, this is far too painful. I retire.

AMY (*arresting him*).

No, remain! I would know —

VARNEY.

I have already said too much. My master did not authorize me to reveal everything; quite the contrary!

AMY.

What! What did he wish you to hide? Speak, I bid you!

VARNEY.

Well, then — the Queen — loves the Earl.

AMY (*prostrated*).

She loves him! And he?

VARNEY.

He, madame? How can it be helped? England desires this marriage. France supports it, the rabble carol it in their ballads, the astrologers read it in the heavens, the courtiers in the eyes of the Queen, and the Queen —

AMY.

And the Queen — finish! — in the eyes of Leicester.

VARNEY.

I did not speak of my lord.

AMY.

But I speak of him! What does my lord think, what does he do?

VARNEY.

What does he think? Only God knows that. What does he do? He hardly knows himself yet. Still, the love of a queen, and of a queen who can make him a king! the need of ever climbing when one has one's foot on the ladder of ambition! of losing all or winning all, — the throne or the abyss! And then to reject a couch which a royal canopy surmounts!

AMY.

I understand !

[She falls overwhelmed into a chair.

Marriages that trouble thrones are easily broken, you said ? Ah, Leicester, why this profanation ? What doth it profit thee to offend God by a divorce and men by a perjury ? Dost thou then think I could live after I had lost thy love ? Go to ! go to ! Let sorrow have her way. Thy ambition shall not have long to wait for its freedom !

VARNEY (*aside*).

It begins to work !

AMY (*rising, seized with a sudden thought*).

Ah, but I think only of myself, — and my father ? I think only of my love, — and my honour ? Once I believed a time would come when I could fling myself on my father's bosom, a proud and happy daughter, loved and respected by her husband. I shall go back to him abandoned like a mistress, dismissed like a servant, without having been for one day, for one hour, acknowledged as a lawful wife.

[Hiding her head in her hands.

O the shame of it !

VARNEY (*with feigned timidity*).

If I might venture a word, my lady, I think I could point a means by which you might cease to be Countess of Leicester without ceasing to be a lawful wife.

AMY (*looking at him in astonishment*).

How ? I do not understand you, sir.

VARNEY.

If, at the very time when the Earl of Leicester, hurried on by the irresistible bent of his ambition, aban-

dons a treasure grander than all the royalties of the earth, a man were to present himself before you, — a man less brilliant but more trustworthy, — who offered you, instead of a title, illustrious indeed, but which you wear only at the price of secrecy and misconstruction, an honourable name, an alliance proudly proclaimed in the face of the world; if this man —

AMY (*interrupting, and restraining herself*).

Pardon me! You are, if I mistake not, speaking of yourself, Master Varney?

VARNEY.

Well, madame, I am; and I venture to lay at your feet, instead of the selfish and fickle heart you are losing, a deep and devoted love, — a love that would value a single glance of your eyes higher than the smiles of all the queens of earth.

AMY.

And so you offer to make me Dame Varney?

VARNEY.

No, Lady Varney; for such is the title the wife of Sir Richard Varney shall bear, who is no longer an equerry of the Earl of Leicester, but a free knight of the realm of England.

AMY.

But surely you cannot think I may change my name and condition in such easy and simple fashion?

VARNEY.

On the contrary, I do. In the eyes of many, even in those of your father, I am reputed the fortunate person to whom you have given your heart. Permit me, while anxiously awaiting the hour that crowns my happiness,

to beg of you to let appearances outstrip reality for the nonce. Her Majesty to-day holds a reception. Let me present you to her as my lawful wife. Accept under —

AMY (*breaking forth*).

Enough! Thou hast unmasked thyself, Richard Varney! So it was to this thy wiles tended, forsooth! Thou wouldst represent Leicester as a traitor to make me one! Thank God! I have seen the snare in time. The desertion with which thou hast threatened me is a lie! This marriage with the Queen, a calumny! Oh, what happiness! Pardon me, my Dudley, for having listened for a moment to this foul-mouthed lackey!

VARNEY.

So you do not believe in the note written and signed by the hand of my lord?

AMY.

I believe that thy treason is twofold, and that thou deceivest us both.

VARNEY.

"All that Varney does, he does by my order and by my will," writes the Earl. It is his will that for his safety and yours I present you to the Queen as my wife.

AMY.

Silence, impostor!

VARNEY.

And beware! His further commands are that if you do not obey, means more violent and terrible —

AMY.

Be still, thou varlet!

VARNEY.

Ah, this is too much ! You do not fear, then, to turn my love into hatred ? [*Advancing toward her.*] You forget that we are alone, and that you are in my power.

AMY (*alarmed*).

Help ! help ! my father !

VARNEY (*laughing*).

Your father ? Ah, do you imagine that your voice can reach from Kenilworth to Templeton ?

AMY.

Father ! father ! help !

SIR HUGH (*appearing*).

I am here.

VARNEY (*thunderstruck*).

Sir Hugh Robsart !

SCENE V.

The same. SIR HUGH ROBSART.

SIR HUGH.

I am here to answer your call, my child. But, in good truth, there was no need of such precaution and mystery to show me the man who is your husband.

AMY.

You are strangely mistaken, father. This man is not my husband.

SIR HUGH.

He is not your husband! God's blood! Would he refuse —

VARNEY (*quickly*).

Ah, sir, 't would be my greatest happiness and honour to make your daughter my wife. The difficulty does not rest with me.

SIR HUGH.

What? Doth it rest with you, Amy? You must —

AMY.

Father, one single word —

SIR HUGH.

Interrupt not thy father! Bootless to say, I would have preferred for the ancient house of Robsart an alliance with one of older lineage. But Sir Richard Varney is now a knight, and may look for higher advancement, seeing that his master, the all-powerful Earl of Leicester, may be to-morrow the husband of Elizabeth, and King of England.

AMY.

God! What do you say? Leicester? Are you sure?

SIR HUGH.

Did you not know it? I but repeat the universal report.

AMY (*staggering*).

It was true, then! Dudley! O my God!

[*She sinks into a chair.*]

SIR HUGH (*running up to her*).

Daughter! She is fainting!

VARNEY (*calling*).

Foster! Janet! [JANET *enters hurriedly*.] Look, your mistress is ill.

JANET (*running to AMY*).

My lady! [She holds a flask to her nostrils.

VARNEY (*to SIR HUGH*).

Allow her to come to herself, sir. Her mind, you see, is disturbed. Your presence moves and agitates her.

SIR HUGH.

Yet to leave her thus!

VARNEY.

You shall return, my revered father, when she is in a better condition to listen to you.

SIR HUGH (*looking tenderly at AMY*).

Poor child! Well, I leave.

VARNEY.

Permit me to accompany you. [*Aside.*] And now to find Alasco.

[SIR HUGH and VARNEY go out together.

SCENE VI.

AMY, JANET.

JANET.

My lady!—my dear mistress! Ah, she opens her eyes.

AMY (*looking earnestly round her*).

My father! Where is he?

JANET.

He will return. You feel better, do you not?

AMY.

Yes, child, yes; I am well. But leave me for a time, Janet, leave me. I need to be alone. Yet stay.

[Drawing off her bracelets and necklace.]

Take these jewels with you. They weigh me down now!

JANET *(after replacing the jewels in the casket)*.

My lady need only call, I shall not be far.

AMY *(alone. She remains motionless for some time and without speaking. She gazes round her with haggard eyes)*.

Am I, then, in a dream? Is what Varney said possible? Is it really true? The crime of Dudley is confirmed by the voice of my father! Alas! I am now of such little account in this world, my place therein is so little regarded that men speak before me of that which tortures my soul as an indifferent, or even pleasant, bit of gossip! And so, to-morrow, perhaps to-morrow, there will be no longer, even though death be not one of the guests at Kenilworth, an Earl and Countess of Leicester! He — will be King of England. And I —

[JANET enters with a silver goblet on a silver-gilt salver.]

JANET.

Madame! — my lady!

AMY *(turning round abruptly)*.

What is wanted! Leave me!

[She recognizes JANET and continues gently.]

It is thou, Janet! Ah! pardon me —

JANET.

Madame, you are too good to be so unhappy.

AMY.

Yes, very unhappy, dear child ! But what dost thou bring me there ?

JANET

A soothing potion Foster has bid me take you ; it is a composing draught which must needs give you a little rest after all your sufferings.

AMY.

Rest, Janet ! There is none for me now, except in the tomb. But put it on the table, and go.

JANET.

Will you drink, my lady ?

AMY.

Yes, I will drink. Go, go, my child.

JANET (*aside*).

How pale she is, for a countess !

[*She places the salver on the table near AMY and leaves.*]

SCENE VII.

AMY, then FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

AMY (*alone*).

Innocent, simple people, who believe that the wounds of the soul can be cured by the medicaments of the body ! that despair is but a disease, and sleep can be restored to eyes that can no longer weep ! Little ser-

vice can this potion do me, in good sooth! Yet my faithful servants have said to themselves when preparing it: "It will do good to our poor mistress!" Shall I, then, slight their affection? There are but these two hearts in the whole world that feel any love for me, — but this poor maiden and my warder, Foster, who feel compassion for the Countess of Leicester! Since they, at least, have my interest at heart, I owe them the return of showing myself grateful for their cares. I will drink.

[She takes the goblet and raises it to her lips.

A VOICE (*apparently from the interior of the wall*).

Do not drink!

AMY (*stopping*).

Who speaks to me?

[The door of ALASCO opens and gives entrance to FLIBBERTIGIBBET, who with a bound places himself in front of the Countess.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I, noble lady. Do not drink.

AMY (*astonished*).

You! Who are you?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Do you not recognize the poor imp whose life you saved?

AMY.

Ah, it is you! But were you not in prison?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, in Mervyn's Tower, behind bolts and bars, in a frightful dungeon, which you reach by a parlous gallery, the floor of which sounds terribly hollow.

AMY.

You have been able to escape, then ?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Despite my nimbleness as a goblin, I don't think I could have wrought such a miracle as that. No, I was released by an older devil, whose earthly name is Alasco. There is a secret passage running through the wall which leads from my cell to his laboratory. Oh, don't imagine it was the kindness of this worthy Alasco that prompted him to free me ! He did so on certain conditions. One was that I should undertake the delicate task of putting you to sleep. And the nature of the sleep ? I am ignorant of it. I could only catch the gist of a few words during a rapid dialogue between your Varney and my Alasco. Varney had come in search of a draught ordered by the Earl of Leicester, and intended for the Countess. 'T was all I could learn.

AMY.

But what is the nature of this draught ?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

There can be no mistake about that. It comes from the kitchen of Alasco. It must be poison.

AMY.

Poison ! and is it Leicester that sends it ?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes ; he gave the order to have that draught composed for you.

AMY.

Pardon me, O my God !

[She again takes the goblet and raises it quickly to her lips.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*arresting her arm*).

What are you doing, madame? It is poison, I tell you! Did you not hear me?

AMY.

Yes, I have heard you; but since Leicester sends this poison, I must drink it.

[*She raises the goblet anew to her lips.* FLIBBERTIGIBBET *snatches it from her.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

No! you once saved my life, and it is my turn now! To hell with this devil's broth!

[*He dashes the goblet on the ground.*

You shall see this floor grow as black before an hour, as if Beelzebub himself had breathed on it.

AMY (*gazing fixedly on the spilt liquid*).

What have you done, and what is going to become of me, now that I have no more poison?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Become of you, noble lady? By the genius of Shakespeare! between a husband who seeks to divorce you by poison and a Varney who is hankering after you, there is but one course by immemorial usage in all tragedies, comedies, and pantomimes, — flight!

AMY.

Why should I fly, and where?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Eh! Have you no family? — a brother, or a father?

AMY.

My father! Yes, you are right, my father! Ah, surely now I am released from my oath! I will tell all to my father! I shall at least die justified and pardoned. Yes, let us fly! But how?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

By this window, which is hardly a story above the trees of the park. Yesterday I wanted to frighten Alasco, through the window, and did so by means of a ladder, which I afterwards hid in the thicket. [*Leaning out of the window*]. It is there still. You can easily descend with my help. It is mere child's play, madame!

AMY.

I consent. Make haste, then; I am in a hurry to meet my father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Wait! Are you forgetting nothing?

[*He takes the cloak lying on the back of the chair.*

This cloak. [*Looking at the table.*] What is this parchment? A pass from the Queen! Heavenly powers! We must not leave behind us this precious viaticum!

[*He hides the parchment in his bosom.*

Now, come, come, madame!

AMY.

May God watch over us!

[FLIBBERTIGIBBET *aids her in stepping from the casement.*

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *Kenilworth Park. At the back, in the distance, the roofs of the new castle are seen through the trees. On the right, the Fountain of Neptune.*

SCENE I.

AMY; FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *entering abruptly.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Your flight has been discovered, madame. Alasco and Foster are searching for you in the woods. Fortunately, one is old and the other dull-witted, and this bushy, rolling corner of the park is wonderfully well-adapted for a game of hide-and-seek.

AMY.

But I must have some information; I must know where to find my father.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

If I could leave you alone an instant, I would soon bring Sir Hugh Robsart to you. But take care! There are people coming in this direction! Good heavens! 't is the Earl of Leicester with his worthy equerry!

AMY (*bitterly*).

Leicester and Varney! the two conspirators!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Come, madame, come! All is lost if they see us!

[*He hurries her into the coppice on the right.*]

SCENE II.

LEICESTER, VARNEY.

LEICESTER.

Speak quick! The Queen has nearly finished her walk along the lake. I am in a hurry to join her.

VARNEY (*violently excited*).

My lord, you were a witness that I was able to make the Queen understand that my wife was very sick and in no fit condition to be presented to her Majesty. Well, I have just learned that the Countess has fled! It is worse than resistance, my lord, it is rebellion.

LEICESTER (*thoughtful*).

I cannot impute this resistance as a crime to her, Varney; or, if it were a crime, it was a crime of love.

VARNEY.

But, my lord, the Countess exposes you to the danger of being charged with falsehood —

LEICESTER.

She has ever walked in the path of honour and loyalty. That path must be mine too, Varney, and not the one you would have me tread.

VARNEY.

The road in which you are leads to greatness, to supreme power.

LEICESTER.

Yes, by falsehood and treason.

VARNEY.

Ah, my lord, it is now too late to retreat. Elizabeth, blinded by her own passion rather than by you, has shown a want of self-restraint that, while it permits you to hope everything, ought to make you fear everything. The day on which she opens her eyes, the awaking will be terrible. Bethink you what the fury of an outraged woman can do when that woman is a queen. Take care! It is not your lands and honours merely that are at stake, it is your life! And the safety of the Countess is worth as little as yours. The Queen might spare the man whom she loves; would she spare the rival whom she abhors?

LEICESTER.

It is just this danger to Amy that makes me pause. I must, at all cost, defend and save her.

VARNEY.

And how? A subject cannot struggle with his Queen.

LEICESTER (*reflecting*).

No, and I will not make the attempt. But to-morrow, perhaps, the Queen will be no longer at Kenilworth. Then —

VARNEY (*in terror*).

Great God! my lord, you are not thinking of leaving England! You will not, good my lord, by exile fling to the winds the most brilliant fortune that man has ever dreamed of!

LEICESTER.

A fortune with which yours is closely bound, is it not, Master Varney? However, I reckon on your devotion —

VARNEY.

My lord!

LEICESTER.

Well, well, let the Countess be sought for,—not to take her away from here, but that I may have discourse with her. Let us now go to the Queen. [*He goes out.*]

VARNEY (*following him, aside*).

If he leave the country I am a ruined man! If he see the Countess I am a dead man! [*He joins LEICESTER.*]

SCENE III.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET, AMY, then VARNEY.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*coming out of the thicket and following LEICESTER and VARNEY with his eyes*).

They are going away. You can come out safely from your fortress of briar. But take care of your beautiful eyes, for never have I seen branches more disposed to caress them than those, with their thorns too. [*AMY appears.*]

AMY.

To think that I am actually hiding from Leicester as from an enemy!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

And I go now to seek your natural protector against this enemy,—your father. Do you keep quiet in the angle of that fountain. Should necessity require, you can easily reach the coppice from it.

[*He conducts her to the fountain. VARNEY appears at the back.*]

VARNEY (*aside*).

I really think I saw Flibbertigibbet. [*Seeing AMY.*] Ah, the Countess! What would it be wise to do?

What if I dared? 'T would be a very bold stroke! But audacity has helped me so far, and I am in such extreme peril that I must risk all to save all. [*He retires.*]

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*to AMY*).

Wait for me here, my lady. Before a quarter of an hour I shall return with Sir Hugh. [*He goes out.*]

AMY (*alone*).

I deserted my father for my husband, and now I have but one single idea, — to leave my husband for my father. Leicester, is it possible that after trying to pass me off as the wife of thy lackey, thou hast wished to poison me? Alas! he who can commit a base act can also commit a crime! Where now is the great Earl, the noble Dudley? All is over between us. There is not in my soul one spark of love for him; it has been extinguished by my scorn. I do not even hate him.

[*She sits down, pale and motionless, on the shaft of a column, near the fountain. The Queen appears.*]

SCENE IV.

ELIZABETH, AMY.

ELIZABETH (*reading a note*).

What means this mysterious summons? "Let the Queen come alone to the Fountain of Neptune." Well, I am here. [*Discovering AMY.*] Who is this woman?

AMY.

The Queen! O heaven! the Queen, it is the Queen!

ELIZABETH.

What is that? Woman, what art thou doing here?

AMY.

Your Majesty — I was passing by. I beg leave to withdraw —

ELIZABETH.

No, speak. Thou dost seem disturbed and almost fainting. Take courage, girl, thou art in presence of thy Queen.

AMY.

Madame, 't is why I tremble.

ELIZABETH.

Take courage, I say! Hast thou any grace to beg of us?

AMY.

Madame — I beg your protection, madame.

[She falls on her knees before the Queen.]

ELIZABETH.

Each daughter of our realm hath right thereto while she is worthy of it. Stand up and come to thy right mind. Why, and in what, dost thou crave our protection?

AMY.

Madame — I cannot tell! Alas! I know not.

ELIZABETH.

Why, this is mere folly, girl. We are not accustomed to ask questions so oft without receiving an answer!

AMY.

I entreat, — I implore your Majesty, — let me be restored to my father.

ELIZABETH.

But I must first know this father of thine. Who art thou? Who is he?

AMY.

I am Amy, daughter to Sir Hugh Robsart.

ELIZABETH.

Robsart! In good sooth, I have, for two days, been much busied anent the affairs of this family. The girl asks me for her father, the father asks me for his daughter. Thou dost not yet say all that thou art. Art married?

AMY.

Married! O God! then you know all, madame? Yes, it is true! Forgive me! forgive me in the name of Heaven, most gracious lady!

ELIZABETH.

Forgive thee, girl? Eh! for what should I forgive thee? That is the concern of the father thou hast deceived. Thou seest I know all thy story; thy blush avouches it for true. Thou hast let thyself be seduced, carried off —

AMY (*proudly*).

Yes, madame; but the man who seduced and carried me off was my husband.

ELIZABETH.

In truth, I know thou hast repaired thy fault by marrying thy ravisher, — the equerry Varney.

AMY.

Varney! Oh, no, madame, no! As there is a heaven above me, I am not the degraded wretch you would

make me! I am not the wife of that contemptible villain Varney!

ELIZABETH.

What! what does this mean? Methinks, wench, thou canst talk fast enough when the subject liketh thee! [*As if to herself.*] Of whom am I the dupe here? There is some shameful mystery or other under this. [*Aloud.*] Amy Robsart, it was in the presence of the noble Earl of Leicester, his master, that Varney declared himself thy husband —

AMY (*sadly*).

In presence of the Earl —

ELIZABETH.

Yes. But tell me, woman, whom hast thou married? Tell me — for by God's light I will know — whose wife or whose paramour art thou? Come, speak out, and be speedy! for thou wert better dally with a lioness than palter with Elizabeth of England.

AMY.

Ask the Earl of Leicester; he knows the truth.

ELIZABETH.

Leicester! The Earl of Leicester! Woman, thou dost belie him! Who has set thee on to this odious falsehood? Who has suborned thee to slander the noblest lord and truest-hearted gentleman of our realm? Come with me instantly. — But here he is himself in search of us. [*Raising her voice.*] This way! this way! Were he closer to us than our right hand, thou shalt be confronted with him, thou shalt be heard in his presence that I may know if there be in all England any man so distraught as to lie to the face of Harry VIII.'s daughter!

SCENE V.

AMY, ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, VARNEY, *all the Court.*

ELIZABETH, *her eyes fixed on LEICESTER; AMY, pale and fainting.*

LEICESTER (*aside with a terrified gesture*).

O Heaven! Amy, with the Queen!

ELIZABETH (*aside*).

How pale he looks! [*Aloud.*] My Lord of Leicester, knowest thou this woman?

LEICESTER (*in a low voice*).

Madame —

ELIZABETH (*violently*).

Knowest thou this woman, my Lord of Leicester?

LEICESTER.

Your Majesty will permit me to explain —

ELIZABETH.

Hast thou dared to practise a deception on me, — on me, thy benefactress, thy confiding and too partial sovereign? Thy present confusion doth seem to avouch thy treason. If 't is so, by all that is holy, false Earl, thy perfidy shall meet its due reward!

LEICESTER (*dejected*).

I have never wished to deceive you, madame.

ELIZABETH.

Silence, my lord! That head of thine standeth in as great peril as ever did thy father's!

AMY (*aside*).

O God! —

LEICESTER (*drawing himself up proudly and speaking in a firm voice*).

My head, my sovereign liege, cannot fall but by the sentence of my peers. At the imperial bar of the parliament of England will I plead my cause, and not to a princess who thus requites my faithful service. The sceptre of your Majesty is not a fairy's wand to build a scaffold in a day.

ELIZABETH.

What! My lords, you have heard! We are defied, I think, braved in the very castle we have bestowed on this proud man! My Lord of Shrewsbury, you are Earl Marshal of England. Attach him of high treason.

AMY (*aside*).

O my God! I thought I no longer loved him!

ELIZABETH.

Raise not thy head so haughtily, Earl of Leicester. Our father of glorious memory hath ever caused those heads to fall that listed not to bend. Good cousin of Hunsdon, order out your band of gentlemen pensioners, and take the traitor into instant custody. Take from him his sword, and be speedy about it. We have spoken. [HUNSDON *draws his sword*; *three gentlemen advance toward* LEICESTER, *who stands calm and motionless*.

AMY (*running and throwing herself at the feet of the Queen*).

No, no, madame! Pardon! justice! He is not guilty! he is not guilty! No man can accuse in aught the noble Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH.

Well, in good sooth, wench, this is a marvel! Didst thou, thyself, not accuse him an instant ago? Hast thou, then, belied him?

AMY.

Did I accuse him, madame? Ah! if I did, then, of a truth have I belied him, and I alone deserve your anger.

ELIZABETH.

Beware, insensate woman that thou art! Didst not thou, thyself, say, a moment ago, that I had but to question thee to discover that the Earl of Leicester was privy to thy whole history?

AMY.

I did not know what I was saying, madame; they practised on my life, I was mistaken, my reason was upset —

ELIZABETH.

Who then is thy husband, or thy paramour, Amy Robsart, if as thou hast just now affirmed thou art not the wife of Varney?

LEICESTER (*advancing*).

I must confess to your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

My lord, let the woman speak.

AMY.

Madame! [*Aside.*] O heaven! [*Aloud.*] Yes, madame, I am the wife of Varney!

LEICESTER (*aside*).

My self-devoted Amy! Ah, if in endangering myself I did not endanger her as well!

ELIZABETH.

And so thou dost confess, young woman, that all the disorder of which thou art witness has been caused by thine impudent lies and silly imposture? Dost thou admit thou camest hither with intent to slander the illustrious Earl of Leicester, and ruin him in our esteem?

AMY.

It seems I must admit it.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Ah, her devotion rends my heart. [*Aloud.*] Beseech your Majesty, deign to hear me —

ELIZABETH (*smiling*).

In an instant, dear my lord, pray you. Let us have the pleasure of seeing your innocence established without your aid. Your enemies have suborned this wretched creature. Allow us to question her.

VARNEY (*advancing*).

Gracious lady, she is not as guilty as seemeth to your Majesty. I had hoped her misfortune might have remained concealed. But the Queen must have perceived that her reason hath lost its balance, and —

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Wretch!

AMY (*aside*).

It behooves me to endure the sacrifice to the bitter end.

ELIZABETH.

By my troth, Sir Richard Varney, I rather lean to the belief that thy master's enemies have used thy wife as a tool wherewith to weaken his standing in our regard,

though they have but strengthened it withal. Let this woman be led to the prison of the tower, until we take further thought as to her disposal. Lord Hunsdon, to you I commit the prisoner. Have her strictly watched, and give orders that no one — not even the lord of this castle — have approach to her, unless he have a safe-conduct signed by our own hand. You hear, my lord.

[LORD HUNSDON *bows and takes away* AMY.]

LEICESTER (*aside*).

O misery! mine own beloved Amy!

AMY.

At least, if I die now, 't will be for him!

ACT V.

SCENE.— *Interior of the round tower of the dungeons. Old Norman architecture. A cone-shaped roof. In centre of back an iron door; to the right of this door, a small grated window. On the left a couch. An immense piece of timber, serving as a support for the base of the roof, crosses the tower in the upper part.*

SCENE 1.

AMY *alone, seated on the couch, pale, her hair in disorder.*

AMY.

The sacrifice is finished! I do not know how it is I have become almost a State criminal, seeing that my only faults have sprung from my love. The Queen is my rival! the Queen! and her anger will not touch me except to some dread purpose. To-day the prison; to-morrow — Dudley, they told me thou didst wish to take my life. I will anticipate that wish of thine and give it to thee freely. For thee the throne, for me the grave. I shall vanish, and thou remain with this Elizabeth who is a queen. O dismal thought! when she thrills in his embrace I shall be lying stretched on my lonely and icy couch in the tomb! O agony! How bitter and harrowing is jealousy to one about to die!

[*She hides her head in her hands and weeps. At this moment a door on the right in the wall, hidden by some carved work, opens; it turns noiselessly on its hinges, allowing FLIBBERTIGIBBET to enter, and then closes of itself in the same manner. FLIBBERTIGIBBET advances slowly a few steps, and then stands in front of AMY, who has not lifted her eyes.*

SCENE II.

AMY, FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

AMY (*without seeing FLIBBERTIGIBBET*).

And is not this dungeon itself death? Am I not out of reach of the living world? Where is the ear that could hear my voice? Where is the hand that could touch mine?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*without changing his posture*).

Here.

AMY.

Who is there?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Flibbertigibbet, at your service.

AMY.

You! Are you, then, in very truth, a sorcerer or a goblin that you have been able to enter this impenetrable prison, and that too, may Heaven pardon you for it, without a door being open?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Unfortunately, God has nothing to forgive me in this matter, noble lady.

AMY.

But how have you entered?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

By the way which you shall leave by.

AMY.

I cannot understand —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It is very simple.

[*He points to the concealed door.*

There is a door there.

AMY.

Indeed? Where does it lead to?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I have already told you. It leads by a secret stair to the laboratory of Alasco, and from thence to the chamber whence you have escaped once, and whence, with the help of God or the devil, you shall escape a second time. But make haste! By some lucky chance or other, Alasco has gone out. He may return at any moment, and then escape would be difficult. Come, madame, come.

[*He takes a step toward the secret door.*

AMY.

I thank thee, my poor friend, but I cannot follow thee.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

What?

AMY.

Hie thee away at once! If thou wert discovered here —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, I am so anxious about myself! But you?

AMY.

I remain.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*stamping*).

Oh, now, this is too bad! Do you think I have come here for the purpose of going away as I came? Do you think I am going to leave you here in this cold, damp atmosphere with the owls and bats, with cobwebs about your bed and jailers at your door, while outside the air is

pure and free, and plain, forest and river delight the eye? If you wished me to let you die in this cell, why did you save my life?

AMY.

I cannot help it, my friend. Am I not condemned to death by him to whom my life and soul belong? Though I were at liberty, what could I do with my freedom? Is not Dudley unfaithful to me? Has not Dudley desired to poison me? Has not Dudley abandoned me to his Varney? Is not Dudley about to wed Elizabeth?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Tush, tush! that is an old story, madame. The scene has changed. Your Dudley is not unfaithful, he has not attempted to poison you, he never thought of giving you up to his equerry, Devil-Varney, and, far from intending to wed the Queen, he is, at this moment, plotting an act of high treason, — namely, your rescue.

AMY (*clasping her hands*).

Could this be possible? Are you telling the truth?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It was Varney alone who planned everything, who, in fact, concocted the whole plot.

AMY.

Ah, it is, then, as I thought at first! O my Dudley, how much I have wronged thee!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

That is not all; your father knows of the marriage, and has been reconciled to your husband. Both are now adopting means to save you; they are, perhaps, both waiting for you outside. Will you still stay here? Will you keep them waiting?

AMY.

Oh, no! quick! quick! Lead me at once to my lord! lead me to my father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! The bolt is drawn! Let us lose not a second! Follow me!

[He runs to the concealed door and tries to open it; it resists. He makes a fresh attempt; it is useless. The door neither moves nor opens. He turns in consternation to AMY who has been looking on, trembling.]

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Shut! The door is shut and bolted on the outside! Alasco and Varney have returned. That room which they left vacant was a snare.

AMY.

And so you are lost on account of your attempt to save me. Hapless wretch that I am, my misfortune is contagious.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Beseech your ladyship, do not speak of me! I have nothing to lose. It is you who lose everything!

AMY.

Yes, I am again plunged back into the night of my dungeon! The last glimmer of hope is quenched.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*drawing himself up*).

The last? Not so, dear and noble lady! We must never despair. Your father and husband are at this moment taking measures for your safety. I wonder if I might see them from the window.

[He brings a wooden stool to the casement, mounts it, and stands on tip-toe in order to see the outside.]

The sun is descending behind the trees of the park. We have but a quarter of an hour of daylight. Ah! what do I see yonder in the shadow of the twilight? Two men muffled in cloaks. They are coming toward the tower. They are stopping at the foot of the wall. They are measuring it with their eyes. Madame, it is they! My lady, it is they!

AMY.

They? Who?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Your father! your husband!

AMY.

My husband! my father! Are you not mistaken? Let me look!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Look, madame.

[He leaps down from the stool.]

AMY *(taking his place at the window)*.

Ah, my God! It is, it is my husband! my Dudley! Ah, how hard it is to see through these bars! *[Calling.]* Husband! father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

The tower is too high for them to hear you. But shake your handkerchief, they may, perhaps, see it.

[AMY waves her handkerchief outside the bars.]

AMY.

Yes, yes, they see it; they raise their hats. But *[sadly]* I see them and they cannot see me!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

No matter! they are warned and will deliver you.

AMY (*shaking her head*).

Deliver me!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, surely. What doors do not open before the lord of this castle? He has power and he has gold.

AMY.

That will not suffice to-day. He cannot enter the tower. Thou knowest not, my poor friend, what are the orders of the Queen? No one can enter here,—no one.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

What! not even the Earl of Leicester, the all-powerful minister?

AMY.

He less than any other. No one enters, I tell you, unless he have a safe-conduct signed by the hand of the Queen.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! Then it is a royal pass that is wanted?

AMY.

Undoubtedly.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*drawing a parchment from his pocket*).

Here it is, madame.

AMY (*taking the parchment*).

What! the Queen's signature! Now, once for all, this must be magic!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hardly even foresight. I found this talisman yesterday on your table.

AMY.

Ah, yes, I remember! My father's pass.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I have done well not to forget it, as he did. Quick now, madame; wave your handkerchief again, and throw the parchment to your rescuers.

AMY (*waving her handkerchief*).

They have seen the signal.

[She throws the parchment.

May God guide it safely to its destination!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Follow its course with your eyes. What is happening to it?

AMY.

It is falling. It whirls about. It is now above the trees.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Pray God it do not nest in one of them!

AMY.

No, it is still falling. Ah, it is now on the ground before them.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Have they seen it?

AMY.

They have!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

We are saved!

AMY.

My Dudley is kissing the parchment. He is making me a sign. They are both making for the postern. The angle of the wall hides them from me. I no longer see them.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

But you shall see them soon again, and very near, noble lady.

AMY (*descending from the window*).

Blessed be God! [*She looks at her disordered garb.*

He will soon arrive. In what a condition I am to receive him! My gown quite rumped, my hair in disorder —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A good sign, that! Sorrow is giving way to vanity! But I think I hear something or other walking.

[*He listens at the iron door.*

It is the tread of men. How is it that the floor of that corridor sounds so hollow?

[*The sound of a key turning in the lock is heard.*

They are opening it, madame, they are opening it!

[*The door at the back opens. Enter SIR HUGH and LEICESTER.*

SCENE III.

The same. LEICESTER, SIR HUGH.

AMY (*rushing into the arms of LEICESTER*).

My lord!

LEICESTER (*pressing her to his heart*).

My beloved!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A moment ago she was as pale as a corpse, and now she is as rosy as a bride! These young women change colour oftener and faster than the Star of Aldebaran.

LEICESTER.

You must be wroth with me, Amy. How shall I ever expiate the wrongs I have done you? Say that you forgive me!

AMY (*still hanging on his arm*).

Ah, it is thy part to forgive, noble Earl! Why did I dare to suspect thee? [*Turning to SIR HUGH.*] And you too, my father, have you forgiven me? Do you forgive?

SIR HUGH (*holding both her hands clasped in his*).
My child! My daughter!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Meanwhile, as the door is open, why do we delay?

LEICESTER.

He is right. Time is precious. Listen, darling; everything is prepared for my escape and thine. In an hour a carriage shall be waiting for us in the wood. Trusted friends, among them Strathallan, the Earl of Fife, will protect our flight. A brig, ready to sail for Flanders, will receive us on the coast; and before daylight dawns, we shall be sailing together, free, wafted to happiness by favouring breezes, — thou far from thy prison, I far from the Court!

AMY.

What! my lord, dost thou, for my sake, abandon rank and honours, power and fortune, and that brilliant theatre on which thou wert the admired of all Europe? What sacrifices you make for a poor woman!

LEICESTER.

This poor woman, as you call her, has made many for me.

AMY.

You condemn yourself to exile!

LEICESTER.

Art thou not my country?

AMY.

Dudley, thou renoucest everything.

LEICESTER.

Nay, rather nothing, since thou art everything for Dudley.

AMY.

Who knows? Perhaps even a throne?

LEICESTER.

A throne? Go to! By leaving the Queen to follow thee, I renounce, something tells me, the chance of climbing, not the steps of a throne, but the ladder of a scaffold!

SIR HUGH.

My lord, forget not that while you speak, this imperious Queen is waiting for you.

LEICESTER.

Yes, we must leave thee awhile, dear wife!

AMY.

Why so? Do you not lead me with you?

LEICESTER.

Not yet. In an hour the Queen quits Kenilworth. At this moment her retinue fills every part of the castle, and thy escape would be impossible. I go to hold her

stirrup, and when she leaves I shall return here. Kenilworth will then be deserted, and by favour of the friendly night, I shall carry thee off from this hideous dungeon.

AMY.

It will be the second time you have carried me off, my lord. Ah, forgive me, father!

LEICESTER (*to FLIBBERTIGIBBET*).

Do thou, lad, follow us. I shall have need of thy service in arranging matters when I am in attendance on the Queen.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I am at your orders, my lord.

AMY.

Am I, then, to be again alone?

LEICESTER.

For an hour, at most, my beloved!

AMY (*hanging on his neck*).

Dost thou remember, my lord, it was by the sound of thy horn thou didst give warning of thy presence in the woods of Devon in the early days of our love? Well, to please me, wilt thou announce thy return this evening in the same fashion?

LEICESTER.

I promise thee to do so; meanwhile, be happy and without fear. Farewell.

AMY.

Farewell.

[*They embrace. The Earl goes out with* SIR HUGH and FLIBBERTIGIBBET.]

SCENE IV.

AMY (*alone*).

Farewell!—There is something ominous in that word; it is as if they who uttered it bade each other meet in eternity and not till then.

[*She sits on the couch and muses.*

They are now far away; I no longer hear their footsteps. I am once more alone. I know not why it is, but sad thoughts come trooping to assail me. Am I not about to be happy? Nay, am I not happy now? Am I not about to be free,—free to see him, to hear him, free to love him? Oh! mind and body are both sick unto death; the emotions of this day have crushed all my energy. Would it not be well to snatch a few moments' rest before beginning this journey which is to lead me to happiness?

[*Gradually her voice grows weaker and her body seems to be weighed down.*

O my Dudley, what a sweet future is ours! Exile, 't is true; but exile with thee!—some secluded, obscure abode; long days spent near thee, at thy side; a life all freedom and love,—provided that this be not a dream!

[*She falls asleep.*

SCENE V.

VARNEY, ALASCO.

At the moment when AMY falls asleep, the concealed door half opens. VARNEY passes his head through the opening, as if assuring himself that all is safe. After concluding that the Countess is asleep, he enters, lead-

ing ALASCO by the hand who appears to follow him with reluctance and impatience.

VARNEY.

She is asleep. [*To ALASCO.*] Quick! come, I say! come!

ALASCO (*placing a lighted copper lamp on a stool*).

What do you mean by dragging me after you in this fashion? My time is not so worthless that I can afford to waste it in listening at doors in your company. I was busy at a critical moment on my great work. I had three retorts on the furnace, filled with such a perilous substance that were the least drop of it to fall into the fire, this tower would be shattered to pieces.

VARNEY.

Alasco, hast thou heard?

ALASCO.

I was not listening.

VARNEY.

The Earl of Leicester is going to fly,—fly with his wife! and if he succeed in his purpose, in a few hours the favourite will be an exile, and the favourite's equerry shall fall from the point he reached, a hundred times lower than the point from which he started!

ALASCO.

What is that to me!

VARNEY.

What is it to you? The goods of the outlaw will be confiscated, and the domain of Cumnor with the rest. Then, good-bye to thy laboratory, thy alembics, thy pharmacy of philters, thy cookshop of poisons! Now, dost see what it is to you?

ALASCO.

Well, what is the cause of all these mishaps? The escape of this lord. Go, inform Elizabeth of it, and the page will not open

VARNEY.

Yes, but it will though! It will open to receive the Earl. Elizabeth will send Leicester to consummate his marriage with Amy on the scaffold. And what shall Varney gain by that?

ALASCO.

The thanks of the Queen for having undeceived her.

VARNEY.

The thanks of the Queen? Say her hatred, rather! I shall inspire her with horror. And even if my good offices escaped punishment, the best I could hope for would be to be forgotten.

ALASCO.

You need not tell her it was Leicester that planned the escape of his wife.

VARNEY.

Then he continues to be the all-powerful favourite, and sooner or later, his vengeance is sure to reach me.

ALASCO.

But then, if every course is bad —

VARNEY (*coming close to* ALASCO).

Not every one! Alasco, if fate laid a heavy hand on this woman, this wretched Amy, who has caused the Earl to do so many foolish things; if she disappeared from the world; if she died — a natural death — how dost thou think it would affect Leicester?

ALASCO.

He would forget her. He would continue the successful minister, the omnipotent favourite, the great Earl who gives festivals and entertainments to the Queen.

VARNEY.

And we too, Alasco, we too would continue our peaceful progress in his train, advancing as he advanced, and finding ourselves earls or barons on the day when he would awaken king.

ALASCO.

Yes, just as you say, — Baron Varney, Prince Demetrius Alasco!

VARNEY.

So there is but one obstacle between us and fortune, — it is the life of this woman.

ALASCO.

And what do you intend doing with the obstacle?

VARNEY.

Remove it!

ALASCO (*with a gesture of terror*).

Oh! I thought you loved this woman?

VARNEY.

She has called me lackey! I hate her. [*Half drawing his dagger.*] To think that an inch of steel in that proud heart would sweep away the impediment that checks the career of so many brilliant destinies!

[*He makes a step towards* AMY.]

ALASCO.

Varney! Varney! a stab! 'T will be known as thine!

VARNEY.

Thou'rt right. Well, hast thou not—hast thou not some elixir, some poison, to even breathe which is death?

ALASCO.

A poisoning! 't will be known as mine!

VARNEY.

Then what is to be done?

ALASCO.

Whatever thou listest. This business likes me not. I care not to meddle with it. A woman!—and a woman in her sleep!

VARNEY.

Thou art a coward!

ALASCO.

And besides, as I told thee already, my crucibles are waiting for me.

VARNEY.

Thou art a madman! [*He appears to be musing for some moments.*] What is to be done? What is to be done?—Ha! a natural death? A death that leaves no trace behind it? [*Striking his forehead.*] By heaven! I have it. Is not this tower the tower of the dungeons? Alasco, the floor of the narrow corridor that leads from this cell has a trap-door outside the very threshold of the door.

ALASCO.

Well!

VARNEY.

Touch a spring and the supports which sustain the trap fall, which, thereupon, keeps its position level with the floor by a slight adhesion, and yet is undistinguished

from it. The slightest pressure on this trap would suffice to hurl her into the abyss beneath.

ALASCO.

Well?

VARNEY.

Now, the Earl has left the door open. Wait for me a moment.

ALASCO.

Where art thou going?

VARNEY.

To press the spring that drops the supports of the trap.

[*He goes out by the door which has remained open, and which half closes in such a way as to hide the corridor.*]

ALASCO.

What foul plot is this hell-hound hatching? And my elixirs that are burning away yonder! — Well, Varney!

VARNEY (*returning*).

It is done! Now woe to whoever sets foot on that trap! A touch as light as a sylph's would launch the luckless intruder into eternity!

ALASCO.

Surely thou wilt not seize the prisoner and hurl her into that gulf?

VARNEY (*with a sneering laugh*).

Oh, fie! what brutal fancies thou hast! I will not touch the prisoner.

ALASCO.

Then I don't understand.

VARNEY (*lowering his voice*).

Didst thou not hear the Earl promise to warn his wife of his return by the sound of the horn?

ALASCO.

Well, what follows?

VARNEY.

Follows? Dost thou think that when the captive hears that sound she will have patience to wait until her lord comes here? Dost thou think she will pause an instant before running to meet him? Well, if in her thoughtlessness she pass this door, if the worm-eaten props of the trap give way beneath her, if she fall, how can I help it? Will it be my fault? It will be an unfortunate accident simply.

ALASCO.

To destroy her by means of her best affections! It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!

VARNEY.

And now let us retire. The Earl cannot be long now. Return, if thou list, to thy damned crucibles. I will remain on the watch behind the concealed door.

[*They both go out.*]

SCENE VI.

AMY (*alone*).

Deep silence reigns in the cell, which is only lit by the copper lamp on the stool, forgotten by ALASCO. After a few moments' silence and sleep the sound of a horn is heard outside. AMY awakes with a start.

AMY.

What noise was that that woke me? Was it not the sound of my lord's horn? [*She listens.*] Nothing but the wind whistling through the crannies of the wall. 'T was what, perhaps, aroused me. So much the better! I have had a fearful dream.

[*The sound of a horn is again heard.*]

Yes, I was not mistaken; it is the horn, it is the signal. [*She runs to the casement.*] Torches, horses, armed men. Yes, it is my Dudley! He alights from his horse, he is helping my father to alight. How handsome he is, my Dudley! Ah, that door is open! I will hie me to meet him, and so spare him the trouble of returning to this prison.

[*She wraps her veil about her and kneels.*]

O God, to thy care do I commend myself!

[*The horn resounds for the third time.*]

Dudley, I am thine!

[*She takes the lamp, pushes the door open and disappears.*]

When the door falls back to its place a shriek is heard, and a crash like the fall of heavy beams of timber. Then the small door opens and VARNEY appears, pale and shuddering.

SCENE VII.

VARNEY alone. *He enters slowly, with haggard eyes.*

VARNEY.

Is it done? Ay, I heard the crash. No one here. It is done. Well, all is over! Beshrew thee, Varney, art thou afraid? [*With a horrible chuckle.*] The lamb hath fallen into the pit of the wolf, is that a cause for trembling? If I were to see —

[Advances to the door, then starts back and returns.

To see? What boots me seeing? I have heard. It is enough. Rejoice, Richard Varney, from this hour dates thy fortune!

[Suddenly a great noise is heard behind the concealed door.

It opens violently. A red, flickering glimmer is seen, and ALASCO, deadly pale, rushes with a cry of horror on the stage.

SCENE VIII.

VARNEY, ALASCO.

ALASCO.

Ah, woe to us, Varney!

VARNEY.

Alasco! What aileth thee, pray?

ALASCO.

Ill betide us! A curse is on our works!

VARNEY.

What?

ALASCO.

Varney, my alembic hath exploded, the tower is half fallen and the castle on fire!

VARNEY.

What sayest thou, thou wretch? The castle on fire?

ALASCO.

Look!

[The glare gradually grows stronger. The flames are heard hissing outside.

VARNEY.

Great God !

ALASCO.

We have no time to lose. The conflagration is travelling fast. Let us fly !

VARNEY.

Yes, let us fly !

[*They run to the iron door. ALASCO pushes it and recoils appalled before the open gulf on the threshold.*]

ALASCO.

Devil ! what abyss is this ?

VARNEY.

It is the trap of the dungeons.

ALASCO.

A gulf impossible to cross ! Flight or safety is impossible. On one side, this chasm ; on the other, fire ! Death ! death ! there is only death !

VARNEY.

'T is thy fault, poisoner !

ALASCO.

'T is thine, assassin !

VARNEY (*pointing to the blaze*).

Who caused that fire ?

ALASCO (*showing the open trap*).

Who opened yon gulf ?

[*The conflagration makes rapid progress, the flames come through the concealed door, the roof splits, the wall cracks, sparks fall thick as hail from the pinnacle of*

the tower. At this moment FLIBBERTIGIBBET passes through a breach in the roof and appears standing on the transversal beam of timber beneath.

SCENE IX.

VARNEY, ALASCO, FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Varney! Alasco!

VARNEY.

Who calls? Is it hell?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hell is content to wait for you. Reproach not one another! 'Tis I who have caused the explosion of the alembic. 'Tis I who punish ye.

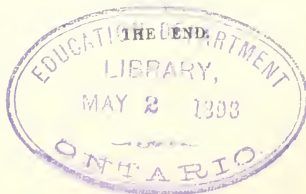
VARNEY.

Ah, thou accursed imp of the devil!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Fiends who murdered an angel! Follow ye her into yonder gulf. Ye shall not follow her farther!

[He disappears through the opening in the roof, which sinks, and buries VARNEY and ALASCO beneath it.]







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